Absolute Duo Volume 4

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アブソリュート・デュオ！ Ⅳ

Absolute Duo

黎明せし異能の境界

柊★たくみ

Illustration 浅葉ゆう

MF文庫 J

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「こっしかありませんから、一緒に寝ましょう」

「……。えーっと……」

「一緒に寝ましょう」

一回言われた。

ぽんぽんとマットを軽く叩きながら、銀色の少女が俺を促す。

「ねーねー、みやびちゃん。それなーに？」

どきりとみやびの
心臓が跳ね、慌てて隠す――

が、その仕草はあからさま過ぎて、逆に
吉備津に興味をそそらせた。

「あ……な、何でもないよ」

だが、俺の声は届かない。

「どうして……？
透流くんこそ、どうして
わたしを見てくれないのかな？
こんなに強くなったのに、
どうして？」

俺と《K》の間へと、みやびが立ちはだかる。

「くっ！　どいてくれ、みやび！
どうして俺たちが
闘わなくちゃならないんだ……!?」

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エピローグ

「《七芒夜会（レイン・カンファレンス）》への招待状――確かに、お受け取りしましたわ」

Prologue

"It have now received the-----Invitation to <<Rein Conference>>"

What is <<7 Rein Lunar>>?----

That was the important term chosen by a group of 7 people for the word-<<Absolute Duo>>.

They who were crowned with the <<Sepher Name>> symbolizing the stars, were walking in different paths even though the <<Absolute Duo>> was the main goal.

Even so, they would have a meeting in one place sometimes.

That was the banquet with the name <<Rein Conference>>.

And now-----there was an invitation sent to the Kouryou academy chairman-Tsukumo Sakuya.

"I am ordered to tell <<Blaze Diabolica>>-sama, that the supervisor is waiting for the day to meet you"

"I am honored. Please tell the supervisor that I am anticipating this banquet"

After confirming the contents of the invitation handed to her, Sakuya smiled to the servant who was dispatched by the man who 's the center of <<7 Lunar[Rein]>>.

---But, the moment the heavy door was closed when the servant left, the girl buried her small body into the chair and made a big sigh.

"You don't look happy with this, Sakuya-sama"

"Feeling down when you think about attending a worthless banquet it's obvious"

In front of Mikuni who was right beside her, Sakuya made a second sigh.

She does not feel that meeting other <<7 Lunar[Rein]>> members would provides some kind of merit to the thing she should be doing-----the advancement of her <<Lucifer>> research.

Honestly speaking, she felt that it was just a waste of time.

(…….No, that is not necessarily the case)

Suddenly, the thought of a member of <<7 Lunar[Rein]>>-----the << Equipment Smith>> sending peoples called << God's Destruction[Libel] Team>> to infiltrate their place twice, popped up in her mind.

The fight with the men wearing battle suits called <<Unit>> was a good chance for her to see the talents of the 1st year students , including the branch school students.

The thing she wanted to see was the natural talents of the people fighting.

She wanted to see if they can fight against fear and fight with their life on the line-----

In just one night, she was able to see the talents that can originally only be seen when the students take on several missions.

Although the girl was almost kidnapped, she thought of the great results she gained.

(Now that I think about it……..)

Several students popped up to defend the black clothed girl; they took the action to save her, after she had been kidnapped.

They fought against danger with the <<Irregular>> boy as the leader and because of their strong will and tenacity, they were able to see the path of victory and send the <<God's Destruction Team>> away for the second time.

Libel

Because of that, the leader of the enemy team took a strong attachment to him.

Sakuya felt some kind of flow, when she thought of the connection formed between the two of them.

(Which means, it might be very interesting to see them consciously bite each other next time)

"…..You look quite happy, is there something?"

"*Giggle*…….I felt an unexpected joy now that I changed my thought pattern"

Mikuni had questions because his master changed in just a short time.

However, after he thought again he concluded that the banquet might be related to her research.

Even though he had no clue what kind of relation there was, Mikuni knows that the black clothed girl prioritize everything that will bring her closer towards the path of the <<Absolute Duo>>.

Sakuya did not say anymore and stood up.

"Where are you going?"

"I will be going to the research lab. There is something I want to prepare before the banquet. I think I would have already finished it if not for the useless banquet entertainment in the first place"

Even though she said that, he was now sure that the girl would not let the banquet end without anything happening.

"I am looking forward to this. Just what kind of flower will he bloom as? *giggle*, *giggle giggle*……."

The girl in black clothes smiled in front of the opened door.

That smile can give strangers the creeps if they ever saw that smile.

And thus, the banquet had started.

The meeting of the peoples who have a connection to << Absolute Duo>>------the <<Rein Conference>>.

Chapter 1 『Everyone Has Things They Don't Want To Say

Part 1

The first Saturday after coming back from the seaside school has arrived.

Seasonally, the world would completely be in a summer mood but, that's something unrelated to Kouryou academy.

With a minimum of one general subject lesson added in, Kouryou has taken in consideration the time for ability training----- battle arts, the summer break here takes the Bon festival as the main holiday and the break isn't even one week.

With that said, even though it's the last 2 weeks of July, it was the time where they should be heading back to school but-----

"Julie, Let's get going"

While dozing off and sitting down, the silver girl opened her eyes when I called out to her.

"Ja-……..."

"Are you alright? It's been hot every night recently, and it looks like you haven't been sleeping much……"

"Nai. I am okay, please don't mind me"

Even though Julie said that, the hot days will continue from now on, and there was a forecast that today was going to be a very hot day with a temperature crossing over 35 degrees.

(Uuun, it would be nice if there's something I can do for her… ……..)

I probably can't do anything with the heat but, I pondered on whether if there is something I can do when she goes to sleep, and when I was doing so-----

"Okay then, let's go Tooru"

"Aah, okay"

Instead, I was the one getting urged and we left the room with Julie following me from behind.

Even though it was unneeded to say this, a strong sunshine was shining down when we got outside the dormitory.

"It looks like it's going to be hot as predicted. It's probably going to be tough but, let's work hard, Julie"

"Ja--♪"

Silver Blonde

After the girl with Silver hair nodded, the ribbon's bell echoed and made a cooling sound.

In the familiar street to the school from the dorm----

There were students heading to the school in the surroundings and a lot of them were wearing dark expressions.

Even though it's summer break--------that was not the reason.

They were wondering if they ***should continue attending Kouryou academy or not.***

The day they got back to the main school from the seaside school, the chairman's speech that took place during the school's emergency assembly was the cause for that worry.

Pretext—the attack that happened before was revenge from a criminal organization which has fought the Dawn organization's public order last time. Just like what happened, this revenge to the academy was the first case that happened but, there was a possibility that the same thing might happen again in the future.

With that based on, she left the decision to everyone if they wanted to stay in Kouryou academy.

As a result, it left many students to ponder on the choice for their future.

That's because, the attack not only caused property damage because of gunshots and explosions, but many were injured and-------the death count was in the double digits.

That reality was the main reason why many students were worried.

It's only normal.

They were just normal middle school students living a normal peaceful life until they enrolled in Kouryou academy. A person's life and death would only happen in the filter of the internet and television or maybe, in fictional categories like in games or Manga.

From the explanation we received before enrollment, there will be danger during training and lessons after enrollment as well as danger during missions when they get employed into the public order maintaining team after graduation.

However-----they noticed this reality when they saw someone close to them had their life taken away from them.

No, they were forced to notice this.

They were forced to notice that the path they are going to go through will not be one found in a normal world, but instead it will be the realm of abnormality.

That was why; this incident has become a big crossroad.

They can either return back to their normal world if they treasure their life, or they can make up their determination and will to advance through the world of abnormalities.

Conclusion-----

Until today, 12 first year students that encountered the attack have left the academy. Most likely from now on, more students will probably choose to quit too. From what I can see, half of the remaining students were pondering if they should continue or leave.

Maybe the upper level students have attended several somewhat dangerous missions in their training, there were less people that chose to quit. But even so, many of them were also pondering too.

Me----and the silver girl walking beside me, has chosen to continue on this road.

As long as both of us follow the path of the <<Avenger>>, we had already made up our mind.

"……It turned prettier huh, Tooru"

"Aah, that's right"

We stared at the scars on the school in front of us that was caused from the previous attack.

Even though the enemy----who has the name <<
Libel
God's Destruction Team>>, attacked the school for the <<Lucifer>> research facility located under the school, the most violent battle that took place was only at the school entrance.

The pillars and wall were damaged or destroyed and red-black bloodstains that came from either the enemy or comrades were sticking on them.

There were offering of flowers left beside the pillars. There were students that stopped and pray and there were also students that quickly entered the school so that they won't have to see that.

"……Let's pray too I guess"

I joined my hands towards the flowering offering and Julie made a silent prayer.

Within the crying sound of cicadas, we quietly passed the time.

When I entered the classroom, there were only 70% of the total classmates excluding the students that quit, even though the class was going to start.

The people pondering on their course of action probably felt like skipping school.

I looked around at the classmates in the room, and leaked a small sigh when I could not see a close female friend----Miyabi in the class.

Her <<Duo>>--Tachibana was attending class and she was talking with a girl.

Nevertheless, it's not like Miyabi was not in school because she was pondering if she wanted to quit or continue Kouryou.

She might still be shocked from almost getting harmed by the battle suit man but, she came to class and seriously attended class and training without resting.

But other than those time slots, she would leave her seat and won't stay in the classroom.

I didn't even need to think for the reason why she took those actions; it was probably the effect of the incident before.

"I love you"

Her feelings reached me, because the waves stopped.

Right after that, the feelings in her heart were put into her mouth and it told me her affections to me.

But, I could not reply to her.

That's because I didn't know how to reply her as I thought about myself as an <<Avenger>> even though I am happy of Miyabi's feelings.

Ever since that day, the gears of the normal days I gained inside the abnormal days in Kouryou academy, has gotten out of order.

The last time I talked to Miyabi was right after we left the isolated island.

"Tha-thank you for saving me yesterday, Tooru-kun……. and…….sorry……you encountered danger because of me, I am really sorry……"

Ever since, Miyabi would only apologetically greet me and would avoid having a conversation with me.

Maybe she wanted to avoid her clear change of attitude, she would show her face during meal time with everyone----but, no one noticed that there was no conversation occurring between me and Miyabi.

I can't talk to her even if I wanted to.

This frustrating situation has been continuing ever since the seaside school.

(I have to do something about this……)

I have no idea if this changed relationship will return to the way it was but, I will continue struggling.

That's because I want Miyabi to smile.

Even if that smile was not going to be directed to me.

Soon, Miyabi quickly entered the classroom when the main bell echoed in the school.

Even though it was just as predicted, it looks like I can't take the time to bring her out and talk to her.

(I guess I will take her time during break time)

The moment I thought that,

"Who is it~~?"

My view suddenly got blocked----and a sweet scent floated at the same time.

Someone was hugging me from behind and covering my eyes.

"……Lilith right"

Without panicking and causing any troubles I took off her hands from my eyes and looked towards the girl who has dazzling blonde hair.
Yellow Topaz

---However, I was far from calm in my heart.

That's because her 2 soft voluptuous hills were getting squeezed onto my back.

"Fufu, as expected from Tooru huh. It's definitely because we love each other on a normal basis"

"If I eliminate the people that would do this, Lilith would be the only one who would do this"

I shrug my shoulders to the gold girl who winked at me before showing a smile.

"Me being the only one would mean that I am special in a way right? Fufuu"

With another name called <<Exception>>, Lilith went ahead and placed herself in my special spot-----

"Uuh!?"

My view was blocked again.

Once again, someone hugged me from behind and covered my eyes.

"Who am I, Tooru?"

"……Julie"

"As expected, Tooru, my <<Duo>>"

"Haha, you're welcome……."

Even though I replied with a wry smile, there was no way I would mistake Julie's voice.

---The feeling touching my back was one of the reasons for my conviction that it's her.

Leaving that aside, the girls who covered my eyes were now looking at each other.

"……..you want to say something right?"

"He immediately knew it was me when I covered his eyes so, you aren't the only one that's special"

"Hee, now you said it"

Lilith raised her mouth, angle in an interested manner.

Without changing her expression, Julie looked straight back at her.

It was a glowing sun and a magical moon.

Two girls with opposite impressions were not in agreement like usual.

Julie turned against the gold girl who wants to make me into her <<Duo>>-----even though with that said, it seems Lilith was not concerned about it but, for a rare scene, she talked back to Julie 's complaints maybe because her special spot was denied.

(Ya-re Ya-re, these two are the same…….)

I made a small sigh and was about to stop them-----

"Okay okay♪ Good morning everyone HR is going to start so sit down♥"

Contrary to the school's atmosphere, a voice which was so cheerful that the person that made it was probably in the wrong room, echoed throughout the room.

Having released her real power to take on the <<God's Destruction Libel Team>>, our homeroom teacher---Tsukimi was now valued in the class and by people as someone to be counted on after they witnessed her mowing down many enemies.

[Good morning White Usa-sensei] [You're tension is high today too, White Usa-sensei] [Well it's White Usa-sensei]

Replies and talks could be heard in the classroom when Tsukimi greeted us.

The thing different from last time was that she was being called "White Usa".

The reason for that was-----

"OooRah! Hurry up and sit down you brats!!"

[It's Black Usa-sensei mode] [This is bad, it's Black Usa-sensei; this is bad] [Black Usa-sensei, scold more……]

Having her identity questioned when her real-self was seen; she showed her snapped off appearance to everyone.

"The gold and silver fighting over a guy there. HR is going to start so, hurry up and end the Shuraba love triangle with the couple and mistress"

"It's not a Shuraba or anything"

"Ja---"

"I agree with that but, I am curious on why I am called the mistress when you looked at me"

"Iyaaan, the Ojou-sama's check sure is strict huh♪"

"Seriously, I always tell you that I am the legal wife"

"Nai, I refuse"

"Why must you be the one doing the refusal!?"

The sights of the 2 girls with silver and gold hair collided again.

I made a small sigh, and stood in the middle.

"Come on, let's end it there. HR is going to start"

"…….Maa, it can't be helped if Tooru says so. Okay then, see you later, Tooru"

Lilith winked at me before returning back to her seat.

"Okay then, now that I said that HR is going to start, its message timeThere is going to be a joint training with the 2nd year

students today okay♪ Okay next; people that turned <<III>> will have to join a training soonOkay next; the people I am going to call now-----“

Turning back to her White Usa-sensei mode, Tsukimi was in her usual high tension, and I could sometime hear giggles from someone.

Inside that, I looked behind at a slanted angle.

Up at my view, Miyabi was a making a depressed expression.

It turned to break time; I chased after Miyabi and called out to her when she stood up from her seat and exited out to the corridor.

“Miyabi, can I have a bit of your time?”

“So-sorry. I am in a hurry……..”

“Ah……..So-sorry”

She most likely did not have any special matter and judging by her recent state, I was able to guess that she was using this way to avoid having a conversation with me.

But even so, I backed down since she told me that she was in a hurry.

When Miyabi quickly turned a corner at the corridor and I could not see her anymore, I made a small sigh and dropped my shoulders; just when I did that-----a dignified voice called out to me from behind.

"Kokonoe, can I have a little of your time?'

When I turned around, I saw my familiar and close classmate---Tachibana.

However, she was currently on crutches and it looked painful.

"Aah, what is it?"

"It's a little about Miyabi. She looks tired recently so, I am thinking of bring her out for a change of scenery after school. So, err, you……."

Even though she hesitated to say at the last part, her intentions were told to me.

Tachibana was saying that I should not talk to Miyabi now.

Tachibana probably felt something happened to me and Miyabi during the seaside school.

But even so, I feel happy for Tachibana's thoughtfulness for taking care of Miyabi's heart first, even though it's something obvious.

"I get it; I'll leave it to you…..but, be careful"

"Umu. Its okay, we aren't going to somewhere deserted. But, from what I heard, it seems the enemy's target is the chairman, << Lucifer>> and also Lilith so, it's probably safe to say that we aren't getting targeted"

"That might be true but. Then, go have fun. Just remember not to force your legs"

"Fufu, you worry too much. Nonetheless, I'll listen to your warning, and will be careful not to force myself"

Tachibana's heels were diagnosed to recover fully in around a month's time.

Since the <<Exceed>>'s recovery ability totally exceeds a normal person's, it seems she will be able to take off the cast by next week.

"……..also, thanks Tachibana"

"It's not something to thank me for. It's for my precious <<Duo >> too"

And after she said that and made a soft smile, Tachibana went back into the classroom and I followed her.

But----

At this time, we had no method to know this.

The fact that there was a malice that would drag everyone in its target's surrounding into the problem without any hesitation,

The fact that Miyabi encountered a devil when she went out,

After noon; we headed to the medical building to have a check-up on the wounds I got from the fight with <<K>>.

The recovery progress was doing well and it seems I and Julie will be fully healed by around mid-next week.

We were told that it's okay to undertake some light exercise and we quickly headed to the training room after the check-up.

"Even though it's light, I'm happy to get permission to exercise"

"Ja--. I did not move my body at all recently"

"Incidentally, we've been only studying nowadays……"

Taking into consideration that there were many wounded students during the attack, battle and stamina enhancement

training were turned to lessons related to knowledge-based general subjects as well as special techniques for mission-purposes.

Thanks to that, once classes ended over the past few days,I felt as though I might have smoke puffing out my head as my frustration continued to pent up. That's why I am happy that I got permission to exercise and my legs turned naturally faster to the training room.

When we reached there, there were quite some students inside and they were using the room for their personal training.

Inside there, I saw familiar faces at the sparring space.

The giant Tatsu crossing over 180 centimeters and a small boy----Tora were sparring.

Strangers that don't know their situation would probably think that Tatsu was at an advantage but, actually, since Tora's <<Level>> was higher, he was handicapped with a weight.

"Tora, Tatsu!"

I called out to them from afar.

"Tooru, and Julie huh. Can you two move your body already?"

"If it's light"

"Fumu. Then, let's spar since it's been quite a while? All this muscle head ever does is swing his fist with power"

Tora splendidly ignored Tatsu's opinion which was "A man won't use stupid tricks".

"Uuuun, I guess I'll pass. Sparing with you won't end up as light exercise"

Thinking of our personality, I can see us lighting up in fire once it starts.

"Fuun. Well I have no choice then. It won't even be something to brag if I beat an injured opponent. The results would be the same if you were fully healed though"

"Bullshit"

After I laughed back at Tora, I stood in front of the mirror.

"Shadow?"

"Aah. There's something I want to confirm. Julie, striking?"

"Ja----"

Julie picked up training swords and stood up in front of a target that looks like a man which was located beside the mirror.

Julie's self-training centered around sparring and striking and it seems it did not change today too now that she can start training.

"You aren't at full form, so don't force yourself"

"……"

"Julie?"

The silver girl did not reply for some reason and frowned her eyebrows instead.

"That's the line I wanted to tell Tooru. Tooru, you always force yourself"

"Uguh……..bu, but I only force myself in situations where I have to do so……"

"……That might be true but, you can't stop me by saying it can't be helped"

The side of her eyebrows dropped and her red (Ruby eyes) eyes looked at me.

I could guess her emotions when I saw the uneasiness in her shaking eyes.

(I see, she's pilling her father's image on me…….)

She might be worried that I'll end up like her father someday.

That's why; I made a smile to make her feel some relief before patting her head.

"Hey, Julie. You remember the promise I said about protecting you?"

"Ja---"

"I have that promise so I will not die. If I die, I won't be able to protect Julie right?"

"Tooru……"

"However, I will do my best to not be reckless. I'll feel bad for making you worry too much"

"Ja--♪ it's a promise"

Even though I lost to the feeling to make a wry smile, Julie made a smile in replacement for that.

"……..Go back to your room"

"Hnn? Did you say something, Tora?"

When I looked at Tora who mumbled something, he was looking at me with disgusted eyes for some reason.

"I am just asking you if you're going to train or not. That's because your mouth was the only part moving, from what I am seeing just now"

"Haha, I'm going to start now. Okay then, let's start, Julie"

I made a stance towards the mirror while Julie looked back to the target.

The same time I lightly swung my fist towards my image shown on the mirror.

Pann! *Papann*!! The training sword hit from the left and right and the target made a loud sound.

(She's fast like I thought……)

While continuing my shadow, I thought of that when I sometimes see the silver girl's movements.

Julie repeated slashes with blinding speed.

However, she wasn't reckless and I could see her hold back her strength.

After thinking I didn't need to be worried anymore, I decided to concentrate on my shadow.

With half of my strength, I swung my fist, switched to the body movements Tachibana taught me and performed a kick.

(……..my body still hurts when I turn my body. Next----)

After I confirmed the thing I was curious about during the fight with <<K>>, I switched to the left posture.

Hrungnir------unlike Mjolnir which is a one-hit kill move, it was a high-speed punch for diversion.

"Haah!!"

I stopped my fist after some shots because of the pain on my chest.

But, that was enough for me to notice.

(It's true that my fist was lowered. But, it's amazing that he can notice this in such a short time, what's more during battle, that <<K>>……)

It was humiliating to have my weakness pinpointed by the enemy but, it gave me good gains.

Leaving aside the chances that we might meet <<K>> again later on or not, I won't be able to beat him if I don't fix this habit.

"Tooru. What's that move?"

Maybe he took a rest from his spar; ***Tora saw Hrungnir and asked me.***

I told him about me mastering this technique, that this technique got broken by <<K>> who found it's weakness in the last battle, and the name given to this technique-----

"Hrung……Since it's Norse mythology, Julie was the one that named it?"

A weird question came over.

"Aah. I thought of naming this as bullet punch but, it resulted into that"

"……."

"What's wrong, why are you quiet?"

"No……you have to thank Julie"

"To Julie? Thank what?"

Without understanding his meaning, I looked at Julie with a questioning face.

"---------?"

It seems the silver girl heard her own name and [Did you call me?] tilted her small head.

"It's a little but, I think it was refreshing for her"

Evening-----as usual, Tachibana talked to me with a voice only audible to me when I was picking the buffet for my menu.

Although we did not say who, it's obviously Miyabi.

"I see, that's great. Also-----Thanks"

"Fufuu. I told you this already during the day but, you don't have to thank me. As a friend and her <<Duo>>, I was concerned about her"

"So---where is she?"

From what I can see in my surroundings, it seems Miyabi wasn't in the cafeteria.

"She said she wanted to run a bit so she went outside. She said she wanted to make up for the the times she did not run for the past few days"

Ever since <<God's Destruction Team>> attacked, Miyabi stopped her daily runs even though she attended lessons and training.

That's why, I felt relieved when I heard that she was going to run again.

(It's about that confession huh……)

I think of talking to her when I see her, once my feelings become positive, and while thinking about that, I reached the table.

After that, everyone had their dinner like usual but-----

"Hey, Tooru. It's about the summer break but, want to go to the UK?"

"Huh?"

Lilith has been as fixed member of our dinner table ever since <<Survive>> and it's only natural to be shocked at the sudden change of topic.

It's only natural since she invited me out to go overseas with no warning at all.

"That's sudden……."

"Rather than suddenly reporting about our marriage, reporting about our relationship first would make things smooth later on I think, you know?""

"……..We aren't going out"

"It's not bad to start going out after this chance you know?"

"Rejected"

Sitting on my left side, Julie swung her head and pulled me to take some space away from Lilith who was sitting at my right side.

"Oh my, Tooru's the one to decide that"

"Before even the topic of going out or not going out, he has to go back to his hometown during summer break so it's impossible to go to the UK"

"I see, how sad. I think I'll give up this time"

"Haha, this time huh……."

While making a wry smile at Lilith's reply, I thought about my hometown which was vacant now when I said those words.

There's no family waiting for me.

(But even so, Otoha's going to be lonely if I don't show up now and then…….)

And, when I was a little sad,

[One, two……..] [[[Congratulations on your birthday-♪]]]

Celebrative voices could be heard at one corner of the cafeteria.

Noisy, cheerful and happy voices echoed in the cafeteria.

"Seriously, how noisy"

"I think it's nice to have a cheerful atmosphere. Thinking about the recent events, I think this is a must" I smiled at Tora who was frowning his face and told him.

"……Fuun. That's true"

Tora snorted roughly and *Dooka* leaned against the back of his chair while folding his arms.

(Birthday huh……..)

My birthday was coming next week.

My heart felt dejected when I thought about it.

That's because, the day before my birthday----was that day in summer.

"Tooru. I have something to talk about"

Tora called out to me when we went out of the cafeteria after dinner.

His expression had an air that won't let me say no and-----

"…….Julie, can you go back first?"

"Ja---"

I made Julie go back to the room.

"Where should we talk?"

"Outside"

(……..Going all the way outside means that, it's a talk that he does not want anyone else to hear"

While looking at his small back walking in front, I started to think about the topics Tora would talk about.

After he exited the front door, the heat from the afternoon was still there and it felt a little hot.

The surroundings were naturally dark but, thanks to the light coming from the dorm, we did not have a hard time walking and we walked over the grass.

"I guess around here is okay…….so, what do you want to talk about.

I folded my arms and asked Tora who was walking closer to a nearby tree----

"……"

There was no reply.

It's not like he didn't hear my voice. Furthermore, the atmosphere he was giving off was as if it was something hard to say.

Judging by Tora's straightforward personality, I could grasp the contents of his topic as something serious.

The silence continued for a while and------Tora talked about his business.

"Still can't mend your relationship with Hotaka?"

"Buuuu!? Wha-whawhahwahwa, h-how do you, no, you noticed……!?"

I did not tell anyone that my relationship with Miyabi had gone weird.

Of course, that goes for Julie too.

I thought the only one who noticed this was Miyabi's <<Duo>> and at the same time roommate—Tachibana but------

"Fuun, there's no way I won't notice. In the first place, judging by your attitude with her until now, there's no way I won't guess that something happened during seaside school"

Just as expected from him.

Judging by the recent state, I never would have thought that he would notice this.

Which means, I think this might be unlikely but, things might have turned complicated because of some reason…….

"I heard this from Tachibana during the afternoon but, Hotaka is going back to her home during summer break. Even though it's short, it will probably be harder to mend things later on if you don 't meet her for about one week. That's why, hurry up and do something about it before summer break starts"

"A-aah……Sorry, to make you worry about this……"

Whether it's the last matter or the last attack, Tora has been helping out a lot.

"It's not like I am worried about you, it just feels annoying…… ….and, that isn't the only thing I want to talk about"

"Eh, there's something else?"

I thought the problem with Miyabi was what he wanted to talk about so I tilted my head.

"It's about going home. It's not about Hotaka's, it's yours"

"Mine?"

Tora nodded and continued on with his original business.

"That woman said this during dinner time right, that you will be going back home"

"I plan on doing so but, what about it?"

"……..Can I follow you when you go back?"

"Aah, let's go back together. We are going to be together for half the trip anyway"

"No"

It was a quiet and yet strong tone.

When I thought Tora was different from usual, his face turned unusually serious and he looked a little stiff.

"I am asking if ***I can go to your house***, Tooru"

My heart skipped a beat.

Tora has been to my house many times in the past.

But, it was when Otoha was still alive.

During a dojo exchange that occurs only a few times per year, we became friends since we were the same age and not long later, Tora started coming over to the dojo to learn and would often come over to my house.

However----That was also 2 years ago.

Tora does not know this.

He does not know that the house no longer has anyone living in it anymore.

"I-I plan to stay for one night only so, Tora head back to your----"

He doesn't need to know.

I decided to reject his visit so that Tora can only recall back the memories of the warm Kokonoe house of the past.

"No, I am going. Let me go. ***Let me offer flowers*** to---Otoha too"

"-----!?"

I was so shocked from those unexpected words that I gasped.

That's because ever since we reunited during the enrollment ceremony I never took on an attitude that would bring him to that conclusion.

"You……knew……."

After a while, I managed to squeeze my voice out and Tora tilted his head vertically silently.

"…….I got contacted by the dojo"

"I see……."

I missed out something simple.

Because he was with us for a long time, it's only natural for this to be told to him.

"***It seems the dojo encountered a fire disaster because of a tobacco misuse***. I knew this and keep quiet about it so, sorry. This may be too late but, this was just sad. She took care of me before. So-----"

"……I get it. Since you know about this, I am counting on you then. Otoha will be happy"

Whenever Tora and I sparred, Otoha would be the one who treated our wounds.

I could clearly remember her giving it her all to assist us and I would probably never forget about it.

I would never forget the memories of me, Tora, Otoha, and---- ***him***; all 4 of us playing together.

"Sorry. Even though you know, this was something I should tell you……."

"Fuun, don't worry about it. Everyone has things they don't want to say…….okay, our talk ends here. Let's head back to the dorm"

Tora started walking in front and I followed behind.

Even though he has a foul mouth, I am grateful for him for being concerned about his friend.

However, Tora does not know.

2 years ago, the disaster that occurred in the dojo was not a fire but rather, it was a tragedy that occurred because he swung his deadly blade.

The only ones that knew of this was me, him and ***another person*****-----**

That person was the one that saved me from that burning dojo.

But, that's good.

Tora might be foul mouthed but he's a good person, and if he finds out about that day's truth-------

If he found out that Otoha didn't die from that fire and was killed, he would fly into a rage and become a captive to vengeance, just like me so……..

That's why, Tora don't have to know.

I am the only one who needs to take revenge against him.

Part 2

"Are you going to run now? It's evening already"

"U-un. But I have been skipping these past few days so, I want to regain the lost time as much as possible so……"

"…… I see, work hard then. However, gradually take it back without rushing yourself. It's bad to suddenly force yourself. Also, you have to eat dinner once you finish running. To avoid getting heat stroke-----"

"Fufu, it's okay so don't worry so much, Tomoe-chan"

Miyabi giggled to her partner who warned her in details just like a mother.

Tomoe got relieved since Miyabi has been smiling apolitically ever since the seaside school.

After changing into clothes to move easier for running, Miyabi told Tomoe that she will be leaving and left the room.

But------

With the sun set and the surroundings dark, Miyabi left the dorm and looked around restlessly. Of course, there were no students walking around in the night and she exhaled when she confirmed that there was no one around.

(Eeeeeerrr……..I think I should take more distance)

Since there might be students coming back to the dorm, the girl ran towards the south side of the academy dorm which has no one around.

The conversation she had with the old man today resurfaced in her mind.

“”Then, let me bestow upon you this-----The <<Power>> of << Ell.Libel >> to you”
God’s Destruction soldier

“<< Ell.Libel >>…….?”
God’s Destruction soldier

“Fuhahaha, just like how the word is read, it’s a power strong enough to destroy god”

“Errrrr…….?”

Even Miyabi who was having a pleasant chat with him, became perplexed

Just what is this old man talking about.

But, the old man did not understand the girl's perplexity and continued his words.

"You're a Kouryou student right?"

"------!! Ho-how did you know that……!?"

Miyabi was not wearing her uniform and was in her casual clothes so; just how did the old man know that she was a Kouryou student.

Unluckily for the girl, she could not become alert since she told him her complaints just now.

What's more-----

"Oh it's simple. I am acquaintance with Tsukumo-Jou-chan"

"Eh……? Errr----Tsukumo? Is it the director? Then Ojii-chan is part of the research team?"

The old man----the <<Equipment smith>> showed a smile and didn't agree nor did he disagree.

However, Miyabi believed her words were correct judging by his smile.

That's only normal. That's because there was no common ground between the students and the researchers coming in and out the <<Lucifer>> research facility under the academy. They would only coincidentally pass by and greet them when they encounter them at the dorm or at school.

But to the researchers, it's not strange that all the students' personal data has been seen by them.

Because of that, she did not doubt him and came to a conclusion .

"I am researching something else than the <<Lucifer>>. That's this----<<Unit>>"

Tooru and also Tomoe misunderstood the reason why Miyabi was sad even though they were not far off.

It's true that the confession was one of the reasons for it.

However, the main reason why she was depressed was because, she made the life of the person she loved-----Tooru, get exposed to danger.

The cause that made her fall into despair was that she became a hindrance to him because of her weakness.

That's why Miyabi yearns for it.

The one thing she wished and yearned for----was <<Power>>.

And right now, Miyabi accepted the <<Power>> extended out to her by the old man.

When she entered the forest at the south part of the ground, Miyabi lowered her sights to the device accessory she was holding.

(Is it really true……?)

Even though she placed her finger on the device's switch, the girl raised her eyebrows at the question floating in her mind.

Maybe that old man said it as a joke to cheer her up.

More importantly, no one would suffer if anyone can gain strength with just a push of a switch.

(But, even so…….)

It might be nonsense but, she anticipated something.

She wanted to say goodbye to her weak self.

As if to reveal her heart, she held the device with both her hands like she was praying and not long later-----

Miyabi pressed the button.

“Please, give me---<<Power>>!!”

Chapter 2 『There Is Only One

Part 1

The electronic sound started to ring beside my pillow to tell me it was time for my morning training.

After turning off the alarm and looking outside through the window, it was clear weather fitting for the beginning of the week.

I changed into a jersey easy for me to move in for the morning training and left the room without waking Julie up.

"Fuwaa……aah……"

When I made a big yawn half-way through descending down the stairs, I could hear giggles coming down.

When I looked up, without any sign of sleepiness, a smiling girl in uniform even though it's still early in the morning, was there with a dignified atmosphere around her.

"Fufu, you look sleepy, Kokonoe"

"Even though it's this early in the morning, I think Tachibana's the one that weird for being normal like usual"

"What are you saying? 6 hours of sleep is enough. Rather, I think you're weirder for yawning in class even though you sleep as much as me"

"It's only normal to be sleepy after studying"

Tachibana descended the stairs while making an exaggerated sigh after she heard my answer.

I became worried since she was coming down with crutches and----

"Seriously, even though general subjects isn't taken importantly , you should be a little bit more serious-----Wahyaaaa!?"

My uneasiness was right in the point (on the spot).

Around the remaining few steps, the crutch got stuck on the slip-preventer and Tachibana's balance broke.

Immediately, the sound of *Bofuu* and the sound of the crutches falling to ground, broke the corridor's silence.

Tachibana----was okay.

I immediately entered her landing point and stopped her at my chest.

"Are you okay, Tachibana?"

"So-sorry……"

"Don't worry about it. It's good that you didn't get hurt. By this case, I guess it would be getting worse?"

"Fufu, that's true"

Tachibana lifted her face while making a wry smile-------

We froze.

Our faces were close.

The weird situation of our faces being close happened before but, since I was supporting her by hugging her this time; this was similar to the kiss scene on the drama stage.

“Fuwaaaaaaaaaah!?”

After a while of being stiff and silent, Tachibana was the first one that regained herself.

She quickly let go from my hands and separated her body but-------

It would be okay if she was her usual self but right now, Tachibana’s leg was covered with a cast and was fixed so, it made her legs lack the freedom and……..

“Waaaaaaaaaaah!?”

Her balance broke again and her body fell to the ground again.

“Watch out!!”

I immediately extended my hands.

It was originally a timing where I couldn't reach her……but, I displayed my enhanced instantaneous force and grabbed the corner of her clothes--------reaching there was okay but, the part I grabbed slipped down.

Doteeen a flashy sound was produced when Tachibana fell down.

"So-sorry, Tachibana. Are you, O-kay……."

Even though I apologized to her for failing to save her, I looked away the moment I saw Tachibana's condition.

"I hit my knee but, it's alright. My leg doesn't hurt so, there's no problem"

"No……There is a problem……"

"What do you mean?"

It seems she did not notice so, I pointed at the problem while looking away.

"Your skirt slipped down……."

"----------!?"

Tachibana's eyes opened wide and she immediately moved her sights to her lower body.

Right when she was falling down, the part I grabbed was her skirt.

Thanks to that, her skirt slid down half way on her thighs.

"~~~~~~~~~~!?"

I don't know the exact color because of her stockings but, her dark underwear could be seen. It was different from the one with strings at the side that she worn during the seaside school (It's not like I saw).

Incidentally, she was taking on a suggestive pose with her butt thrust outwards.

This tragedy happened because of my instantaneous force enhanced by the <<Lucifer>>.

With a silver lining in the dark cloud, I was the only one that saw that appearance since it was still early in the morning.

Tachibana's face turned red and she quickly pulled her skirt up to her hips.

"Fo-forget that!! I will forget it too so forget it!! Get it!?"

"I-I get it, I'll forget. I'll forget it but before that……."

"Before that, what?"

"Can you give me one hit? I think that's enough"

I asked Tachibana while hitting my own cheeks.

"I-I won't do that. In the first place, that accident happened because you wanted to save me. Don't tell me, it was intentional? If that's it then I will have to punch you……"

"No no no, it's an accident, it wasn't intentional!"

However, I will get punched instead of hit if it was intentional huh…….

"Fufuu, then its okay……..With that said, forget it in one second, make it quick"

"Understood…….Well, forgetting it immediately is going to be tough"

Even though I did not seriously looked at her, that lustful suggestive appearance and on top of that, her soft butt worn by that adult blue underwear was burned into my memories instantly .

What's more, Tachibana was a beautiful girl so forgetting this event immediately is going to be tough.

(……If I said that then, I guess she will call me shameless or a pervert)

Judging by the experience now, that's in the 120% ratio.

"Haaa…….I keep showing you my embarrassing appearances……"

I exit the dorm like usual and right when we were heading to the opposite wide area; Tachibana dropped her shoulders and mumbled that.

"…….My breasts gets emphasized when you tied me up with bandages, you pushing your face onto my breast, me falling into panic when I saw a spider, and having you take off my stockings……."

"And, you often Dogeza[4b 1]"

……Tachibana got even more depressed.

"G-get a grip. It's true that you shown me a lot of your embarrassing sides but, you also showed me a lot of good stuffs too you know"

"Re-really!? For example!?"

"Of course for example the results of your general subjects, the chain techniques you showed me on the <<New blade battle>> (Newcomer battle) was amazing, you made strategies and led everyone during the << Survive>> and you're really concerned about your friends like the time you got angry from the bottom of your heart, at the enemy that tried to hurt Miyabi……"

"I might be the one that asked it but, it feels embarrassing to have that all raised up……."

"There's other too you know. Errrr----------"

I recalled back the memories of her scolding me for eating only meat and I averted my sights away from Tachibana by reflex.

"Why did you look away, Kokonoe!?"

Soon, it became time for breakfast and I went back to the dorm after rounding up my morning training.

"Oh yeah, It's about Miyabi, it seems I managed to change her mood. Last night, she said ***I wonder if tomorrow would come faster***. I asked her what happened but, she just replied she wanted to run and that's about it. It's good that she became positive but, I am a little worried if she becomes reckless from rushing things up to recover the stamina she lost when she was resting"

While making a wry smile, Tachibana looked happy and I was relieved from her report.

"Isn't that normal for someone who is recovering from a wound or sickness?"

"That's true. I warned her just in case but, I'll be cautious so that she won't overwork"

If I leave this to Tachibana who's good at taking care of others, I think it'll be okay and I became relieved.

We separated when we reached the front of the lounge after going up the stairs.

That's because I wanted to head back to my room to take a shower to clean off the sweat, and I had Tachibana go the cafeteria.

Having washed off my sweat for 10 minutes, I headed to the cafeteria with Julie who waited for me and half-way through the trip, we stopped at the lounge.

"Ahh……"

That's because we ran into Miyabi who came down from the upper floor to have breakfast like us.

"Good morning, Miyabi"

"Good morning, Julie-chan"

After Miyabi and Julie greeted each other, I greeted her too.

"……Go-good morning, Miyabi"

Although I heard that Miyabi got a bit more cheerful, the confession problem hasn't resolved itself yet.

That's why even though I talk to her, it would only be replying back to greetings and our eyes will not meet------that's what I thought but,

"Un. Good morning, Tooru-kun"

"Eh……..?"

She did not look down or avert her sights away, and replied right at me while showing a smile.

"Is Tomoe-chan already at the cafeteria?"

"A-aah. Errr, she only looked at my morning training and did not sweat so she went on ahead. I went to take a shower so…….. "

I got agitated from the unexpected response and talked a little faster.

"Yeah, you're hair hasn't dried yet. Please be careful so that you won't catch a cold"

"I-its summer so I think it will dry fast"

"Fufuu, that's true……ah, it's going to be a problem if we stand here and talk so let's go to the cafeteria"

[Okay] [Ja---]

Miyabi brought up the plan and we headed to the cafeteria by following behind her.

I looked at her back while feeling a big surprise, different from the one I had in my heart yesterday.

More importantly, her smile was different.

The smile she showed just now was completely different from the smiles she forcefully made during these past few days.

It was enough to make me feel that the atmosphere until yesterday was all a dream.

(I guess her mood really got better huh…….)

I understood that when I saw Miyabi just now----I was made to understand.

At this time, I locked away the weird feeling I had towards Miyabi in the depths of my heart.

On 3 O' clock, the 4th period was the commencement for the battle training ever since the seaside school.

Since the wounded students from the seaside school crossed over 2-digits, and since last week mainly focused on classroom learning, it has been a while since we can move our body in training.

The training focuses on basic battle techniques like hitting and throwing; and would finally become <<Fist practice>>--------

"Okaaay, now then, make a group according to your <<Level>> ♪ After that, make a pair within the group and start the kumite[4b2] when I give the signal; then, switch places after 3 minutes"

By Tsukimi's instructions, we separated into 3 groups.

My <<Level 3 III>> group had at least 5 people.

Nonetheless, Tachibana was at the wall observing us since she hasn't recover yet-----

"Tooru, will you spar with me"

"Tooru is going to be with me"

"Fuun, it's obviously me if it's fighting"

"Uwaaah, I'm so popular……"

"Hahahaha, that's nice Kokonoe. While you are at it, how about 3 vs 1?"

"I'll get KO'ed in one minute!"

I made a comeback to Tachibana who joked.

(However, what am I going to do……..)

I looked at the 6 eyes staring at me------

"…….I guess I'll pick Julie"

"Ja---♪"

I picked the silver girl, my <<Duo>>.

"I'll leave Lilith and Tora for later. Switching places after every 3 minutes would mean, I will have to fight everyone"

After following up with a sentence to the 2 that I did not pick, Tora agreed but------

"Being first has a meaning"

Lilith did not hide her dissatisfaction and pouted.

"…….Well, I'll give it to you. I will be last"

"Fuun. I thought you would say that, the 2nd place has to be yours"

"You don't get it. I will be the last girl for you"

(The meaning sounds different for some reason…….)

While listening to the conversation of the 2 of them who I did not picked, I send my sights to a corner of the battle space.

Father up my sights was the <<Level 2 II>> group----inside them, Miyabi was there.

(She's going to team with Kibitsu huh. It looks like she's laughing too so, I think I don't have to be worried anymore)

And after I became relieved, Julie pulled my sleeves.

"Tooru, how is your body?"

"Hn? Let's see-----I think 70% is okay"

I was recovering accordingly and judging by my situation now, I think it's going to be okay to bring out that much of my strength.

When I asked Julie the same question, she also replied back with around 70%.

"Okay then, we will now start okay <<Fist Practice>>----Ready ……"

After Tsukimi's announcement, *Pan* the group was matched up and after taking some distance----

"Goo--♪"

Together with the start signal, Julie took an instant to jump into my attack sphere with a low posture.

(Is she planning to grapple me!?)

To an opponent who has their powers enhanced by the << Lucifer>>, grappling skills are not suitable for a small body.

Because of that, Julie would focus on hitting in <<Fist practice> > but, she took a completely different action and I fell for it.

---but, that was in the decimals.

I immediately switched my consciousness, and performed a knee kick as a counter.

Even though she was wearing a knee supporter in the mock battle, it will be quite damaging if it hits. But that's only if it hits.

The moment I performed the knee kick, Julie jumped up to the sky.

At the same time, as if to take away one's forte, she performed a flying knee kick.

Of course, I will not eat that easily and blocked it even though it 's tough------however, I stumbled because my balance became unstable since the attack performed was a hit when I was in an unbalance state of standing in one leg.

At that moment, Julie gave a kick while she was still in air.

It was a kick from the left and right; as a finale, she performed a mid air spinning ax kick and that continuous attack did not give me any time to breath.

I blocked all of it and pushed back the last ax kick when I blocked it.

Floating up on the sky, Julie landed on the ground without any problem.

"……..Didn't you say its 70%?"

"Ja---. It's 70%"

"Unlike my 70%, that's one annoying 70%.....but, it's my turn now!!"

"Nai. I will not let you attack"

After saying that, Julie started attacking with her inborn speed. Her moves were not thinkable to be 70% of her strength. However, I know clearly that her full speed could not be compared to her current injured state but-----

(Even if she was at full recovery------she was faster during ***that time***……..)

Yes, those movements I saw right when we were fighting <<K>>------

Together with a presence similar to an unleashed beast, I could not even see the tremendous speed Julie displayed.

(Just what was that……..?)

Since she was close to losing herself, Julie does not remember that presence herself too.

Although I was saved, I felt something dangerous from Julie at that time.

(It's like----she was a silver wolf……)

I thought of that when I recalled back her Silver Blonde hair fluttering during her fight and the presence of a wild beast around her.

It became night time and after having dinner, we rested and relaxed in our room-----

"1st year Kokonoe Tooru----------your belongings have arrived , please come to the front door and retrieve them"

My name was called through the dorms broadcast.

"…….ah, it's here"

I questioned it for a moment but, I immediately knew the reason why I was called when I heard the simple word called belongings.

"What got sent here?"

"Errr……..look forward to it"

"---------?"

I left Julie who was tilting her head in wonder and head out of the room to grab my belongings.

I headed to the front door on the first floor and after I received my belongings from the dorm parent, I quickly headed back to my room.

"Welcome back, Tooru. I was refilling another cup of apple tea; do you want to drink too?"

I nodded to Julie who was holding the clear pitcher with one hand.

"I'll have half a cup"

"Ja---♪"

I took out the content of the box in front of Julie, who was pouring out the cold apple tea taken out from the refrigerator, and *Toku**toku**toku*……such sounds were produced.

"This is the thing I bought"

"A mat…….?"

After seeing the mat I took out, Julie made a questioning face.

"Rather than me explaining, I think it's better to experience it yourself. Julie, lie on this"

"------?"

Even though she made a questioning expression, the silver girl quietly followed my words and lie down-----

"------!?"

She became surprised and opened her eyes wide.

"Is it cold, Julie?"

"Ja---, it feels cool and nice….!!"

I became satisfied when Julie nodded while lying down.

"It's amazing, Tooru…..!! This is wonderful…….!!"

After getting up, Julie told me her passionate impression with glowing eyes.

"These past few nights have been hot so it's hard to sleep right? I tried investigating for things that would make you sleep easier and this magical mat turned up in recommendation so, I ordered this yesterday. I thought ***it would be nice if Julie can sleep easier with this***"

Being born in north Europe, Julie was weak against heat, furthermore, because she's bad with the cold air that released from the air-conditioner, there was a time she got a cold. Since then we have set it to normal temperature[4b 3] and have used an electric fan at the same time but, it still wasn't enough to get rid from the heat.

With that said, it would be nice if this mat could fix her sleeping problem as much as possible.

"…….For me; that would mean, this is for me?"

"Aah. This cool mat is a present from me"

"I'm happy, Tooru…….!!"

After saying that, Julie grabbed my hands tightly.

"Thank you very much, Tooru. I am very very happy"

Even though her tone was not different from usual, her attitude showed me about (just) how happy she was.

Being stared intently like this was somehow embarrassing but, I feel happy to know that she's this happy.

Julie soon left my hands and-----

"Let's set this up quickly and sleep"

She said that while hitting the mat.

"It's okay to sleep but, isn't it a little too early?"

When I looked the time, I saw it was 1 hour faster (earlier) than our normal sleeping time.

"I am confident of having a sleeping problem from being very happy so, I have to sleep earlier or else I won't get any sleep"

I was surprised that she was this happy.

---but, I was happy at her reaction and thought it was cute.

"Haha, I see. It might be early but, let's go to bed"

"Ja---♪"

Julie nodded and----

Placed the cool mat on the bed below and sat on top of it.

---furthermore, the space below was mine.

"Ju-Julie……..?"

At this time, my eyes saw a tail flopping around behind Julie. * It was my imagination.

"Tooru is able to have a nice and cooling sleep from now on"

While hitting the mat, the silver girl urged me.

"There is only one so, let's sleep together"

"……errrrr……."

"Let's sleep together"

She said it a 2nd time.

"…….I get it. Let's sleep together"

"Ja—♪"

I steeled myself for the sleepless night after seeing Julie nodding happily and----

I ordered another magical gel mat the next day.

Part 2

A certain day close to the end of July----

Training ended like usual, and a small commotion occurred when we reached lunch time.

After a shower, Miyabi quickly returned back to the dressing room even though water droplets were still on her hair.

She opened her own locker and put her hands under her uniform which was folded nicely, a metallic feeling then------the device touched her fingers and that made her sigh in relief.

She immediately put the device around her neck and at that point, Miyabi finally noticed that her hair was still wet.

After taking some time to dry her hair, she started putting on her clothes and when she was doing so-----

“Hey hey, Miyabi-chan. What’s hat?”

Kibitsu, who was putting on her clothes on her left side, looked at the device.

“Ah……no-nothing”

Miyabi's heart jumped and she quickly tried to hide it-----but, her posture was just too much and that made Kibitsu interested instead.

"If you try to hide it like that, I will be curious you know. Heeyy, please tell me what is that, Miyabi-chan"

At this time, more than half of the girls had finish washing their sweart, returning to the dressing room, and were putting on their clothes while having conversations with topics they liked.

Miyabi and Kibitsu's conversation was one of them and no one stopped to bother about it but------

"I-I told you it's nothing……!!"

The sudden shout silenced the dressing room.

Everyone's sights focused on the owner of the voice------Miyabi.

"-------uh! Ah……"

Regaining herself, Miyabi noticed her voice getting rough.

"So-sorry……..!!"

To run away from the many sights directed at her, Miyabi ran out of the dressing room.

The remaining girls were so surprised that they could not talk.

"What happened?"

Coming back from the shower room, Tomoe asked about the heavy atmosphere in the room.

When she did that, a girl nearby told her that Miyabi shouted at Kibitsu and left the room.

”What happened, Momo?”

“U-un. Actually------“

Kibitsu explained that she went too far to make Miyabi show her accessory and that made her angry; Tomoe’s face got gloomy.

“Sorry Momo. Miyabi’s emotions are still unstable because of the problem during the seaside school…….”

“Uun, It’s because I went too far and asked…….”

Kibitsu swung her head while making a wry smile after Tomoe made her reply.

She knew that Miyabi wasn’t the only classmate that was mentally stable, ever since the <<God’s Destruction[Libel] Team>>'s attack.

Even though they weren’t injured, it’s true that the students had scars in their heart from the last attack.

“It’ll be good if she gets cheerful soon. Miyabi-chan, and everyone else……..”

"That's right……it will still take some time but, it will definitely turn back to normal. It will……."

Tomoe wished so.

However, she had a complex feeling in her heart.

She did not realize that Miyabi, who she thought had already calmed down, was in a condition where she would shout out by impulse like just now.

But, there were still things Tomoe haven't realized yet.

Tomoe haven't realized that Miyabi got captured by an unimaginable darkness.

Chapter 3 『Please Rely On Me

Part 1

I saw a dream.

It was a dream about that day.

It's that summer day when my precious existence stole my other precious existence.

Heat was fading away within my arms.

Life was flowing away.

She said this.

"Onii-cha……..are you hurt…….?"

I nodded in my dreams.

I did so while telling her it was thanks to her.

"I'm gla…..d……."

After saying that, she------my sister closed her eyes.

"-----,Haa…….!! Haa…….haa……haa……"

I opened my eyes and breathed wildly, making my chest pump up and down.

After I raised my body, cold sweat was flowing down my back.

Luckily I did not make any loud noises and, did not wake Julie up.

I made a big sigh and covered my face with my hands.

(Today too huh……)

Yes, today too.

I have been seeing this dream every day for the past few days.

I know the reason.

Tomorrow-----in terms of time, it's today.

Today is Otoha's-----death anniversary.

Zutaaan!!

"-----!!"

A bullet grazed my ear and I lifted my face after regaining my composure.

In front of my sights-----more than 15 meters away from me, Lilith was pointing her gun at me.

“Hey Tooru, It started already. What are you daydreaming for? ”

“Eh? Ah…….”

The last training for today was a 1 vs 1 format <<Blaze Practice> >.

Lilith was my opponent but, it seems I missed the start signal because I was daydreaming.

The reason why I was daydreaming was because I was thinking about Otoha.

With today, 2 years has passed since then and maybe since it was a turning point for me, I would only think about Otoha whenever there was free time.

However, that was my personal problem and that wasn’t a reason to cause problems to Lilith, who has no means of knowing that.

“Tooru. I don’t know what you're thinking about but, think only about me now. If not----“

Zutaan!! A bullet grazed my ear again.

“The next one will hit”

“Sorry for daydreaming. I will now-----“

After taking a deep breath, I changed my feelings.

“Like you wished, I will think only about Lilith!!”

I focused my consciousness on Lilith and took a step forward to the mock battle field.

(It feels smaller than it looks)

The stage for today’s <<Blaze Practice>> was a bridge placed on the pool almost 2 meters in length.

Unlike a suspension bridge, our ground was fixed but, there were no ropes or handrails on the left and right side.

Basically, we were made to fight on a long thin board and of course, it will be counted as a lost if either one of us falls off.

It seems that this mock battle was made with the expectations that we might fight in this environment too.

Of course, we can’t move like usual but, Lilith was more handicapped than me in this situation.

It can be said that the strongest merit of this gold girl’s <<Rifle> > is that it can shoot from a distance.

But, since she cannot use any foot work to the left or right because it's a small bridge, her shooting directions were only limited to the front direction. As long as her shooting line was limited, it's quite easy to deal with her.

I lowered my body and blocked the bullets with my <<Shield>> while closing in the gaps.

Lilith dropped shooting accurately and started shooting violently to deal with me closing in-----but, even if I might take some damage from that, my legs won't stop unless I receive a critical hit.

"Not bad!!"

In a distance where our foot could reach-----the gold girl praised me when I bring it to close combat.

As a reward, she performed a flexible kick like a whip.

PaPann!! From low to high, she continued kicking without pulling back.

But, although I received the low kicks, I guarded against the high kick and took a step forward before punching.

Even though I aimed for her face, I did not hesitate swinging my fist because I was wearing a glove.

Lilith blocked the punch with the <<Rifle>> and counter-attacked by swinging the stock at my chin. Even though it

only grazed my cheek since I slightly moved my head to the side, the girl continued attacking. She re-gripped the stock from the motion of swinging the stock upwards and pulled the trigger at the same time while performing a back step.

While taking on 2 shots with the <<Shield>>, I instantly closed in the gaps and-----

"Eat this, <<Thunder speed roar Hrungnir>>!!"

I performed my high speed punch. Even though Lilith tried guarding with the rifle, several hits connected.

I added one more kick to Lilith, who groaned-----but, she dodged it by immediately jumping to the pillar which was supporting the bridge before kicking it to jump over my head.

"Seriously, Tooru you're just so rough"

We reached the midpoint of the bridge and Lilith's shoulders were going up and down while she was smiling.

"There's no way I can lose, if you are handicapped like that. Okay, let's do this!!"

"Ahnn, you are too close, mouuu!!"

I jumped forward to stop Lilith from resting.

A see-saw situation of defense and offense consisting of punches, kicks and sometimes bullets continued.

(You're really an annoying opponent, for not having any bad distance!!)

Thanks to the <<Blaze>> known as the <<Rifle>>, Lilith has no bad distance.

That's why; I have to get very close to her.

However-----my heart jumped.

That's because, Lilith was strong.

It was pure fun fighting a strong opponent.

"Haaa…….Hn, haaaa, huuu, haaaa…..! Good, very good…... Tooru!!"

Lilith's cheeks were flushing and she was leaking wild breathing.

Sweat was flowing down her forehead and it would flick off each time we move.

"This is the best. The time Tooru is looking only at me and only thinking of me, really is the best…..!!"

"That's because I don't have the leisure to think about anything else!!"

I shouted while blocking Lilith's kick.

"…….You got shot several times already; Tooru you're tough!!"

"I'm confident with my stamina. That's means I won't go down that easily"

"Mouuu, Tooru you pervert……."

"Why is it!?"

"I don't know, I wonder---why!!"

Lilith mowed her <<Rifle>>. While blocking it, I stepped in and performed a hook but, Lilith kicked the pillar and tried to take distance again.

But, that movement was within predictions.

The moment she kicked the pillar, I jumped behind----towards the point where she would land.

I guessed her intentions and even if Lilith shot the <<Rifle>> mid-air, I blocked it with my <<Shield>>----

I performed <<Thunder speed roar Hrungnir>> the moment a chance was made when she landed.

Several punches connected and one of it caused the <<Rifle>> to fall off her slender fingers.

It *Gara**Gara* dropped onto the bridge and I immediately kicked it away, making it fall into the 10 meter deep pool.

"This is my win"

Lilith's battle style is made up of moves with the <<Rifle>> as the center.

Since her battle style and gun was for her defense, it's also plausible to say that it's my win now that she lost her <<Rifle>>----that's supposed to be it.

"Ah-ra, do you think that I am an opponent that would accept my loss that easily, Tooru?"

It seems the gold girl did not give up and lifted the side of her mouth while breathing heavily.

"It's not, like I lost the match"

"Heeh, what are you going to show me in this situation?"

"Of course, my trump card"

After saying that, Lilith pinched the edge of her skirt.

Sususu……and she slowly lift her skirt up.

"Whaa----"

"I win, Tooru!"

Her trump card----

Basically, I lost my composure from her seduction and the moment a deadly chance was made----

Supaaaaa!! My leg was swept together with one loud sound.

I fell on my back and fell off the bridge with the remaining momentum.

"Dowaaa…….!?"

I extended my hands to grab onto the side of the bridge.

Conclusion; luckily, I did not get hit off into the pool but, since I was hanging on to the bridge, the situation has completely reversed.

"Ahyahyahyahya! Are you kidding me, did you fall for the seduction!! How lame-----!!"

After seeing me, my rabbit-ear homeroom teacher was hugging her stomach laughing while rolling around the pool side.

When I was grinding my teeth at my laughing homeroom teacher, my opponent talked to me from above.

"This is my win then"

"Uu……..Th-that just now----wait, uwaahhh…….!?"

The inside of her skirt entered my view when I lifted my face----I saw a white upside down triangle with frills attached.

I covered my face in reflex-----and noticed that I let my hand go from the bridge.

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!"

A big water pillar was made immediately when I fell into the pool.

After a while I got up from the pool side, Lilith got off the bridge to look at me and laugh.

"Ahahaha. You're dripping wet, Tooru"

"Just whose fault is it, who?"

"Oh my, it's your fault for giving me the chance. Here's a towel "

"It's stranger if a person didn't lose their composure when you did that……"

The gold girl took the towel from the butler and gave it to me.

It's something I prepared for Ojou-sama!! I ignored Sara who was glaring and me and gladly accepted the towel.

After drying off my head, a faint and soft scent tickled my nose.

"It's embarrassing for someone who fell for that to say this but, I think that trump card is a little too much"

"It's okay; I made it so that it can barely be seen"

"What are you going to do if you're seen……"

"It's okay, I don't mind if Tooru is the one looking"

I see then it's okay.

(No no no, there's no way that's okay)

"A-anyway, stop with that trump card"

"I'll think about it. More importantly----"

Her cheerful expression disappeared and it changed into an expression that was seemingly blaming me.

"Why were you daydreaming when it started?"

"Ah…….I-I was sleepy since I did not sleep enough yesterday "

"……Fuun. Then it can't be helped but, you will get hurt if you don't focus"

"That's right. I will be careful"

But-----even after this, I thought of that day for several times and I would cause trouble to the surroundings each time I get distracted.

"Haaa……..."

Even though there's 1 hour left from my usual bed time, I leaked a big sigh from the tiredness.

Maybe it's because I got tired from the training but, there was no mistake that it came from my mental state.

(Today was tiring……)

My body-----more importantly, my heart was very heavy.

Being depressed was probably what I was going through.

The silver girl had a gloomy expression when she saw me like this.

"Are you okay, Tooru?"

"……..Sorry, to make you worry. Looks like I'm not my usual self today"

"It's early today but, let's sleep for today"

After I apologized while making a wry smile, Julie gave a proposal.

"That's true. I'll do that"

I'll feel sorry if I get dizzier than this and honestly nodded before going to sleep.

Tiredness attacked me when I closed my eyes and I fell asleep in no time but----

But tonight again, I saw the dream about that day.

Heat was scorching my skin and the flicking flames were reflected on the white blade.

(Stop……..stop it……..!!)

Even though I should be shouting, my voice won't come out.

As if to laugh at me, he lifted the blade up.

He mumbled something and made a smile-----

The blade was swung down.

Even though it was supposed to be instantaneous, I could clearly see the path slowly made by the blade in zero motion.

It's as if he was trying to torture me as much as possible.

I extended my hands.

But, I know it would never reach and will not make it in time.

"Otoha-------!!"

I jumped awake.

My shoulders were swaying from my rough breathing and sweat was flowing down.

Sweat was also in my hands.

Even if I clenched my fist, the opponent I should be pointing my fist at was not here.

(Damn it…..damn it……..! Why am I……!!)

I hit my head with my fist and my heart felt like it was going to get ripped apart within my cloudy view.

"……..are you alright, Tooru?"

Inside the darkness, I could hear a clear voice like a bell from the bed above.

"Sorry, did I wake you up……."

"Nai. Please don't mind it"

After the bed creaked, Julie jumped down to the floor from the bed at the above level.

"……..did something happen?"

"What do you mean?"

"You have been groaning these past few nights……"

"……if you knew that then, it means I have been waking you up every time. Sorry about that, Julie"

Although Julie said don't mind it again, I felt very sorry to her.

Julie swung her head from the left to right while bending down beside my bed and waited for my words.

"I saw that dream again……"

"……the time when Tooru's precious person's life was taken away huh"

"Yeah……."

I dropped my sights after nodding.

After a while of silence, I looked upwards and did my best to smile.

"Let's go back to bed. I am really sorry to wake you up at mid-nig-----"

I could not finish my words.

That's because Julie hugged me.

What's more, she was hugging me by pushing my head to her chest.

"Ju-Julie!?"

I panicked when my face was pulled onto her modest and yet soft bulges.

"Don't move, please stay still"

"N-no, because-----"

"Just for a while"

She told me that, and I could not continue my words.

--- My heart was one-sidedly in chaos in the first place.

"…….can you hear my heart?"

"Eh? Ah……"

I lost my composure from her sudden action and did not become attentive but-----

*Tokun**tokun**tokun*-----

When I allowed my consciousness to her, Julie's rhythmic heartbeat echoed.

"A-aah. I can hear it……."

"Then, close your eyes and listen carefully"

After a while of listening, my heartbeat gradually went far away.

*Tokun**tokun**tokun*------

Time passed like that.

That one sound inside the quiet world was comfortable.

My heart which got discomposed when I saw that dream turned calm from that comfort.

Not long later, Julie talked----while hugging me.

“I loved it…….”

“Eh……..? Loved what……?”

“I loved it when mama hugged me like this”

“I see……”

Just when I wondered about what she was talking about after she said she loved something, she was referring to the action huh.

“……mama would often hug me like this when I cry whenever I think about papa. It was warm, comfortable and it would make me calm…….”

"So you did this to me too?"

"Ja---……Tooru. I am your <<Duo>> but, I can't share the pain in your heart. But even so, tell me if you are in pain. Please rely on me. I can hug Tooru like this. So-----"

The silver girl quietly told me that.

"You don't have to smile when you are in pain….."

"Julie……."

The feelings of the girl hugging me were warm, gentle and it made me happy.

My heart was touched by Julie-----and I thought of telling about myself to her.

"For a while----can you listen to me?"

"Ja----"

The silver girl gently nodded at my wish.

After Julie let go of my head, she then sat on the bed.

I stared at the silver girl and made a sigh---

I started talking.

"…….It's her death anniversary. Today-----it's already yesterday huh. Yesterday was the day my sister, Otoha died 2 years ago……..no----"

I looked away from Julie and stared at my clenching fist while continuing my next words.

"It's the day she was killed……."

Julie twitched at the edge of my view and she clenched her fists.

"……..Tooru's precious person was your sister huh"

"Yeah……."

She asked me to confirm and I nodded to her words.

Silence got in between for a while before I started to talk about my past.

Until 2 years ago, I learned Juukenjitsu at a certain dojo.

My deceased father being a disciple of that dojo was one of the reasons why.

My first memories of it were when my mother brought me to the dojo to pick up my father when he was still alive.

Over there-----I met him.

He was the successor of the dojo and the same age as me so, we talked during that occasion and found out that we were going to the same school.

We became friends in no time.

That's why I decided to stand beside him, shoulder by shoulder, and swing my sword without any hesitation.

Otoha was always with us.

Since Otoha would always follow me from behind, it was probably a natural thing to happen.

I, Otoha and he passed the days together and our relation got stronger.

We laughed and talked.

Warm and fun happy days continued for several years.

Tora would sometimes join in and things would get even nosier than usual, thus making it fun.

I believed that these days would continue forever and never doubted that fact.

However-----I found out that those days were not eternal.

It was because that summer day came.

My talk ended and the room was wrapped in silence----

"They are dead, because they were weak, huh……."

After a while, Julie mumbled with a voice covered with sadness.

From the way she was squeezing her hands, she probably remembered her father who died in battle.

"Why did that person say that…….to the extent of making his precious person sad, just why……."

"I don't know……that's why I want to be stronger. I will become stronger and know the true meaning of those words. And----"

"……Get revenge for Otoha-san"

Even though I silently nodded---------I knew.

Otoha won't come back even if I knew his real intentions and take my revenge.

Those precious days will never return.

But even so, I chose to continue on the path of an <<Avenger>>.

"…….Okay, that's the end of my story. Thanks for listening to me so deep at night, Julie. I feel better after talking"

"Nai. I will listen to your talk if you're okay with me"

I relaxed my cheeks and thanked the girl again, when she was silently smiling.

"Okay, let's go back to sleep. I'm completely awake now but, we can't stay awake for the whole night"

"……..feeling sleepy, Tooru?"

"I won't for a while. Well, I'll sleep sooner or later after I close my eyes-----"

"If that's the case then, I'll make you sleepy"

"Eh……?"

I could somewhat see, since my eyes were used to the dark.

That's why I could clearly see Julie kneeling on the bed.

Julie extended her arms to me----

Funyon.

"uuuuuuh!?"

She brought my head to her chest and hugged me again.

*Funyon**funyon**funyon*.

There's no way that I wouldn't feel her softness if my face was pulled onto her chest, even though it was modest in size.

(She smells good too…..-----wait, No no no no, what's going on!?)

"Ju-Juli-Julie!?"

"Just like just now, please close your eyes and listen carefully"

"A-aah…….wait, weren't we going to sleep!?"

"Ja---. I will immediately sleep when my mama hugged me"

"O-oh is that so……B-but, I don't think I will be sleeping any time soon. Hahaha……"

So let go of me, was what I wanted to say but----

"Well then, I will lie down like this. You should be able to fall asleep soon"

A crazy proposal came from Julie.

"-----!? Eh, wait, Julie!? Don't tell me, when you said like this…….."

"I think you will have a comfortable sleep. I always have them too"

Kokun

We fell on the bed while she was hugging onto me.

Of course, her modest breasts were pressed onto my face.

“Good night, Tooru”

“Go-good night, wait, Jul---“

“*Snore*---“

“Fast!?”

Maybe it was the effect of the gel mat; Julie couldn’t avoid sleeping comfortably and travelled to the land of dreams instantly.

(Uuu, it feels like I am completely in Julie’s pace…….)

In a sense, it’s like a usual thing to happen.

But even so, I was very happy that she hugged me for my sake.

“Thanks, Julie……”

After I thanked Julie’s kindness, I closed my ears and focused onto her heartbeat.

---But.

*Funi**funi*

(How the hell am I going to sleep in this situation---------!!)

In the end, thanks to the soft sensation touching my face and the satisfactory smell, I could not sleep and stayed awake until morning.

When Julie woke up in the morning, she tilted her head in wonder when she saw me in a wobbly state.

It was the weekend; classes and training ended in the afternoon.

However, I was up all night so I had no memories of the class.
* Basically, I was asleep.

Since we aren't allowed to go outside during the afternoon, I would usually pass the time training myself but, I decided to change my plans for today and take an afternoon nap.

After 3 hours of sleep, Julie and I went to the training room together-----

Half-way, we coincidentally met up with 3 girls talking at the entrance at the 1st floor.

It's Tachibana, Lilith, and Sara.

"Hey there, Kokonoe, Julie. Going to the training room now?"

"Planning to. What are you girls talking about?"

"We were going out to shop so we were talking about it now"

The gold girl replied.

The outside used in this circumstances was referring to outside the premise.

Lilith was wearing summer clothes consisting of a hat with wide visors, a no slip blouse with frills and short pants; its fact that all eyes will be on her who matches her appearance, when she heads out.

On the other hand, Tachibana----was wearing a jersey. What's more, she was wearing sleeves and that makes others feel hot.

"I think a jersey is a little……"

Jerseys aren't exactly bad but, she would definitely attract people's attention, in a way different from Lilith though.

"N-no! I have something to do in the area!!"

"Oh, so that's why…….well, yeah, now I'm relieved"

"Haaa……..looks like I need to make you sit down and have a good slow talk with you……"

I could only make a dry smile when I saw Tachibana make an exaggerated sigh.

"Okay then, I'll be heading out now. Tomoe, I am counting on you with that matter"

"Umu, leave it to me"

After something was passed between them, Lilith urged Sara and headed outside.

Lilith turned around when she got out the dorm before [See you later, Tooru] sending a kiss towards me.

"----Kuh, why does Ojou-sama have to do this for someone like you…..!"

"Huh?"

Not following her master, Sara stood still and just glared at me.

"……..Sara, stop saying unnecessary things and let's go"

"I apologize, Ojou-sama. I am on my way"

Sara walked faster to chase after Lilith after she was called.

---She glared at me for the one last time.

"Haa, I am hated like usual"

"It can't be helped. Lilith is an ojou-sama from a famous family and Sara thinks of you as a suspicious person-----opps, sorry"

"Haha, you're not wrong"

Sara thanked me after the problem that occurred during the seaside school but, her attitude did not change from last time after she thanked me. I won't ask her to like me but, I would feel happier if her attitude towards me would soften down.

"By the way, where are you going to go to Tomoe?"

Julie pointed towards the basket filled with----water filled bottles and gloves, which was placed at Tachibana's foot.

"Fufu, I'll be keeping this a secret"

On a rare occasion, she made a prankster smile and played it off .

"Oh yeah, Julie. I have something to tell you but, can I take a little of your time?"

"Ja---"

I was curious but, I did not pry any further since Tachibana changed the topic.

"…….Kokonoe, we will be having a girl's talk now so, go ahead to the training room first"

"----------? Aah, I get it. I'll go on ahead first then, Julie"

Since standing there to listen to their conversation was impolite, I followed her words and continued going down the stairs to the basement.

It was evening and on a rare occasion, Lilith was not at the cafeteria.

I was a little curious about her since she would eat with us during meal times even though she has a lot of personal matters ----and what's more, my left side was her reserved seat.

Why hasn't she come back ever since she went outside during the afternoon?

"What happened to Lilith, I wonder?"

Even though I brought out the gold girl's name when we got out from the cafeteria-----

"Thanks to that, I was able to have a decent and quiet meal"

"Fuun, whether that woman being here or not, nothing will change"

"Hahaha……"

I regret bringing this talk to Julie & Tora, since they have issues with Lilith.

"W-well, I think she has something important to do"

"Fufu, I somewhat think so too"

The girls that talked with me were Tachibana and Miyabi.

Judging by the cheerful smile she showed me a few days ago, she has completely turned back to normal.

(…..no, she feels more cheerful than last time. But-----)

"Hnn?"

I stopped thinking and moving.

"What's wrong, Tooru"

I looked towards Miyabi and Tachibana when Tora asked me a question.

"No, I'm just wondering why, Tachibana and Miyabi are following us"

I, Julie, Tora and Tatsu were on the 2nd floor but, Miyabi and Tachibana's room was on the 3rd floor which belongs to the girls.

And they had already passed it since the stairs leading upstairs was at the lounge.

"I have something to talk with Julie. It has contents which I don't want others to hear so, I thought of coming over to your room. Right, Julie?"

"------! Ja-ja----!"

Having the talk brought to her, Julie *koku**koku* nodded violently.

“I see……Aah, then should I leave?”

“N-no, you come along too”

“------? Aah, I get it”

Although I felt Tachibana’s tone were slightly anxious, I agreed with her.

But, just when I placed my hand on the door, I felt curious about something again.

“Hnn? Does that involve Tora and the others too?”

For some reason, Tora and Tatsu also passed by their own room and followed us from behind.

“We were told that she had something to tell us”

Tora looked at Tachibana.

“…….I see”

Even though I made a short reply, many “?” appeared in my mind.

(What are they going to talk about?)

I was unnecessarily curious since there was something she wanted to tell Julie, and the other resident of this room was not going to be told anything.

What's more-----

"Kuhah, you're in front so hurry up and open the door. Or what , are you going to make a sexual appeal that you aren't fast, Hnnn? "

Why is Tsukimi here too?

(What kind of combination is this…….)

While twisting my head, I opened the door and entered the room-----

Pann!! The same time with the explosions that came from the party crackers, several colorful objects appeared in front of my eyes.

"Buhooo!?"

I let out my voice in reflex when it was going to touch my face.

"Wah, Puhah……! Wha-what's this….!?"

After I took off the object sticking on top of my face and upper body, I found out that it was paper tapes with 5 different colors.

Ahead of my view when I lost my composure-----a girl with blonde hair was with a bazooka and a butler was behind her.
Yellow Topaz

“Eh? Li-Lilith and Sara? What’s-----“

Even though I tried to ask what was going on, I could not finish my sentence.

That’s because------

*Pan**pan**pan*!! I was surprised by the continuous explosion behind me.

“Wha-whawha…..!?”

When I turned around, 4 (Including Julie) of the people that were going to have a conversation in my room, were holding crackers in their hands. Lilith jumped and hugged me when I was dumbfounded from the turn of events which I could not understand.

“Happy birthday, Tooru----♪“

“Wa-wah!? Lilith, hey, eh, birthday!?”

“That’s right. It’s your birthday today. So, congratulations♪”

While clinging onto me with her arms around my neck, Lilith *giggled* and smiled before looking up at me.

At that moment, everyone behind me started congratulating me .

[Happy birthday, Kokonoe] [Congratulations, Tooru-kun] [Kuhah, you got closer to being an adult huh. Tell me if you want to climb one more floor of adulthood okay?] [Fuun. I'll congratulate you so be grateful]

---also, I ignored Tatsu since he was laughing loudly like usual.

Finally, Julie stood in front of me.

"Congratulations, Tooru. And----"

Julie stopped her words and slipped her hands between me and Lilith before pulling us apart.

"No one told me that you will be clinging onto him"

"This much is okay right. This a privilege for the planner"

"Nai. There is no need"

Lilith puffed her cheeks and looked at me who was still dumbfounded before changing her expression into surprise.

"What's wrong? This might be unlikely but, don't tell me you forgotten your own birthday?"

"W-well it's true that today's my birthday….."

"Then there aren't any problems. Everything is perfectly prepared so, enjoy the party♪"

After I heard Lilith's words while she spread out her hands, I looked around the room and it's true that the room was decorated-----for some reason, it had Christmas style illumination---and a big table which was taken from who knows where, was placed in the middle.

What's more a huge heart shaped cake was prepared.

"Why is it a heart……."

"……This is a rehearsal for me and Tooru's wedding cake"

"…….Is it okay if I slice it into half?"

"Why!?----wait, manifesting your <<Blaze>> without permission is against the rules!!"

Lilith retorted to Julie, who swung her <<Saber>> aloft.

"It's safe within 3 seconds"

"That isn't right!!"

"Kuhahahahahah! I give you permission, silver hair♪ Do it!!"

"Wah, wait wait! Let's calm down, Julie! Lilith too! Tsukimi stop pouring oil in the fire!!"

Silver and gold-----I went between the 2 girls with opposite traits.

After that, Tachibana [Today is Kokonoe's birthday so, let's overlook this okay] told Julie that, and the room finally became quiet.

"How about it, Tooru. Were you surprised?"

"Haha, that's right. I was surprised----but I'm happy. Lilith, everyone, thanks"

I looked around and thanked the usual faces + α, who sat around the cake.

"Fufu. It was sudden so, I could not prepare any presents"

"No no, this is enough"

"Oh my, I properly prepared mine"

Lilith joined right in just when Tachibana replied back with a wry smile.

"The Present---I.s m.e♥"

"……..Is it okay if I slice it into half?"

"There's no way it's okay!!"

Lilith retorted again to Julie, who swung her <<Saber>> aloft.

"By the way, how do you know about my birthday?"

Julie and Tora were the only people that know my birthday.

It's impossible to think that they would tell Lilith that since they have issues with her.

The only possibility was probably through Tachibana but-----

"Did you forget that I'm the <<Exception>>? I can look at the student database anytime I want"

The gold girl just said something crazy just like that.

This is possible to Lilith, who has the title of the <<Exception>> but, it makes me wonder about the protection of personal information.

"I heard about your birthday from her. She told us to gather after dinner, since she would prepare everything"

"Ah! Perhaps, the reason why you were talking at the afternoon was----"

"Right on the money"

It seems, it was that time when she told me to go on ahead because she wanted to have a girls talk with Julie.

"…….So, why is she here?"

I pointed at the rabbit ears hair-band.

"Kuhah, I passed by the class rep and silver hair when they were talking. It looked kind of interesting so, I had them to allow me in"

"She said she would expose this to Tooru unless she joins in so ……."

Julie shoulders fell in disappointment and gave a brief explanation.

"And while we are having dinner, Lilith and Sara was decorating the room"

"I see----wait, ah-re? My room was locked right?"

"Sara opened it"

"This level of lock, isn't any problem"

Sara snorted and looked at me.

(She might be good at it but, this is trespassing……)

Well, I guess I'll forget about this since it's to celebrate my birthday.

"However, why did you see my data again?"

"……Did you forget the reason why I transferred here?"

"I see, it's amazing that you can remember……now that I think about it, what date is everyone's birthday?"

"Fufu, you want to know the profile of your future wife right?"

"……..No, I asked everyone"

"Mine was at May so it's quite back. It's around the time when I transferred in"

Lilith ignored my retort and continued talking.

"I'll be looking forward to my future birthday, Tooru. I recommend the present to be a ring worth 3 months of salary in Japanese style"

"…….When is everyone's birthday?"

I ignored her this time and talked to everyone else.

"Mine is at March"

"That's close. Mine is in April, Miyabi"

Luckily, everyone else replied back and my ignore beautifully succeeded-----

"Wait, Julie's birthday is in April!?"

"Ja--. It's on April 1st. Is there something wrong about it?"

"N-no….it's kind of surprising……."

"------?"

Julie felt wonder when she saw me surprised.

However, it was only natural for me to be surprised. She's the tiniest----not that; she's the smallest in class and who would have expected that she was born the earliest.

"Just thinking about the thought that I might not have meet Tooru if I was born 1 day later, it was a very close call"

"What do you mean?"

"Children born after April 1st will be enrolled to elementary school at the age of 6-----and that's the education method of the school. Which means, having her birthday on April 1st would make her the oldest of our year"

"Heeh, is that so……"

Even though I was surprised at Tachibana's explanation----

(But, I could understand thanks to that)

I thought of that while looking at Julie's modest bulges. * I was well aware that it's impolite.

"When is Tomoe's?"

"Mine is in July so it's next month"

"It's close to Tooru's"

"Umu, its exactly one week in difference"

"Eh? In one week; that's very close. Why didn't you say anything?"

I joined in the conversation by reflex since the date was very close.

"Even if you ask me why……..saying something like "Today is my birthday" is basically telling you to celebrate it"

It's kind of embarrassing now that I tried imagining it myself.

"……if that's the case then how about we celebrate your birthday together?"

"Eh……..?"

Unexpectedly, the one who proposed that was Sara.

"Problem?"

"N-no, it's a good idea. Let's do that"

I quickly swung my head and asked for everyone's approval when Sara looked at me with a dubious face.

"Don't mind me. Miyabi already congratulated me"

It seems that they told each other about their birthdays on the first day they were enrolled here.

However, for some reason, the Bristol family's butler did not give up.

"But, it seems everyone else here did not know about it and I think it's good to celebrate it together"

"Th-that's right, Tomoe-chan. Let's do it……."

"I think so too, Tomoe"

Miyabi followed after and Julie provided sniping assistance.

"Ojou-sama, you think so too right?"

"Yes, I think we should celebrate. If it's that close then, it's decided that Tomoe is also one of today's leading actor"

"B-but……."

"I won't say it twice, Tomoe. Give up and celebrate♪"

"……..I get it. It's a little embarrassing but, let's celebrate together"

Lilith winked and Tachibana made a wry smile before agreeing.

"Okay then, everyone, let's sing happy birthday for these 2"

Sara became the facilitator before we knew it and she urged everyone.

The candle was lit, the room turned dark and 7 people without me and Tachibana sang a song----

We were going to blow the fire when they stop.

"Tachibana. We'll blow it on 3"

"Umu, leave it to me"

"1, 2……"

We stood by each other and inhaled-----

We then blew at the same time and the candle fire was extinguished.

Immediately after we did that, the room turned bright again and we looked at each other.

"Okay, it feels great to extinguish it in one blow"

"Fufu, that's right"

We then noticed.

Our faces were close.

We were in a distance as if we were pledging our love in front of a heart-shaped cake------

“”---------!?””

We quickly looked away and sat straight.

(Th-that gave a shock……..)

My heart was still bouncing.

Incidentally, the facilitator, Sara-----***said this with a smile.***

“We will now have Kokonoe-sama and Tachibana-sama cut the cake”

[Huh?] [Eh?] [What did you say!?]

I and Tachibana were surprised and Lilith shouted.

“Hey Sara, what are you saying!?”

“I apologize for saying this twice but-----I said; Kokonoe-sama and Tachibana-sama will now cut the cake, Ojou-sama”

“Stop with the jokes! Did you forget that I told you that I bought the cake so that I could cut it with Tooru!?”

“Yes. That’s true. However Ojou-sama, you said this when you were preparing for the party. [The person to cut the cake has to be the party’s leading actor]. And just now, Ojou-sama said that Tachibana was the leading actor”

Sara smiled again.

Lilith became speechless.

You are to be feared, butler from the UK. In order to prevent me from cutting the cake with Lilith, she went searching for a chance and she immediately made up a plan the moment she knew Tachibana's birthday was close.

"I have taken the approval from Ojou-sama so cut it with this"

Having cornered down her master with an argument, the servant took out a cake knife with red and white ribbons attached---------- (it's definitely used for weddings no matter what angle I look at it from) and handed it over to me.

There was only one result thinkable if we cut the heart-shaped cake with this knife.

"Errrr……"

"Fuhyaa!? Wh-wh-why are you looking at me, Kokonoe!!"

"Why are you asking, looks like we have to cut the cake together……."

"------!! No, that's shameless!! Do you know what you're saying in the first place!? It means, we will be m-ma-ma-marri----"

It seems even Tachibana was thinking the same thing.

Her loss of composure can't be compared with mine though.

Of course, even I don't want to do something that embarrassing in front of everyone.

With the confession problem still not settled, Miyabi was here too and I want to avoid making any actions that might make her feel conscious about the problem.

But-----

"Hurry up"

Sara's glare was scary; very scary.

Who knows what will happen if I say no.

Because of that, I tried acting as natural as possible and tried convincing Tachibana.

"Don't take it the wrong way. We are just celebrating our birthday. Just what is so shameless about that?"

"Uu……but, errr……it might be true but……"

Tachibana looked a little calmer when she heard my indifferent tone.

Okay, one more push.

"It's a thankful thing. Everyone is congratulating us like this. We should show our appreciation by cutting the cake and have them eat it to show thanks to their efforts"

"……Y-you're right. This is to the end, just a celebration for our birthday, umu"

Convincing complete.

We held the knife together and used it to touch the cake but----------

*Tremble**tremble**tremble**tremble**tremble**tremble**tremble**tremble**tremble**tremble**tremble*

Now that we have to do it, it seems Tachibana became conscious again and her hands were trembling.

(Oh man, she really isn't used to these kind of things……..)

I would swing my head too if I was asked if I was used to the opposite sex but, I was calm thanks to Tachibana's chaotic state.

(I got no choice. I feel bad to Tachibana but, she might cause a ruckus again if I leave her like this----)

"-----Hufuu!?"

"Hey, Tooru!?"

I wrapped my hands around Tachibana's hands and brought the knife to the cake.

I then ignored Lilith's retort and separate the cake into portions equal to the numbers.

"Everyone, thanks for celebrating my birthday today. Let's eat the cake…….hey, Tachibana, you too"

"Eh?.....ah……..eberywaun, twank yweu[4d 1]!!"

I held back my laughter when Tachibana's voice turned inside out but---

Leaving that aside, I could finally relax and enjoy the surprise birthday party.

---but, it was sweet.

The soft sponge cake was moist and the mildly sweet fresh cream melted in my mouth; the cake was so high-quality that even I could know the difference by taste. This occurred when I was eating the cake----

"Sara, will you prepare that"

"I understand, Ojou-sama"

The butler prepared a wine bottle when she was ordered by the gold girl.

When I wondered to myself, "That isn't alcohol right"-----

"It's champagne"

"Alcohol, are you kidding me!! We are underage so that's bad!!"

"You're so strict……..I think letting loose for today is okay"

"Kuhah, you said it! Bring on the alcohol!! I give permission!!"

"You're underage too!!"

I was close to forgetting because of her status as a teacher but, Tsukimi was last year's graduate---which means, she's 18.

"Relax. I became 19 in May"

"You're still underage!!"

"I'm 20 if you round up the numbers"

"The constitution will be meaningless if you say that!!"

Pon a wonderful sound echoed, when I was retorting to Tsukimi.

Sara opened the champagne.

"Don't open it-----!!"

"Tooru, you're noisy from just now"

"…….Lilith. I think drinking alcohol is bad too you know?"

Tachibana finally sent a life-saving boat.

"Judging by the numbers here, I guess everyone will have half a glass? Even children drink sweet sake in Japan right? Then a little bit of champagne is okay♪"

"Sweet sake huh…….Fumu, I guess that much is okay……"

Since my life-saving boat was made of mud, it sank.

After that, I didn't stay quiet for a while until I raised the white flag.

Pouring……..yellowish orange liquid was poured into the glass.

"……."

"What's wrong, Julie?"

I happened to see the eyebrows of the silver girl frown a little so , I asked her----

"I was wondering if it's okay for me to drink that"

"You haven't tried it before? …….well, that goes for me too though"

"There was a time I secretly tried to take a sip when I got curious about what it tastes like since my papa drank it so happily "

"What happened?"

"I passed out when I smelled it and it was morning when I came to"

She downed before even drinking; it seems that she's quite weak to it.

"……..aah, you did say that you tried to but didn't drink it. Well, judging by what you said, you seem to be weak to alcohol so, I don't think you should force yourself?"

"Nai. I should, since it's a party for Tooru and Tomoe"

Even though I tried saying its okay so don't worry, I took it back since it has been 1 year so it should be okay if it's one sip.

"Go on, Tooru. You are the leading actor so you should be the one giving the toast"

Lilith urged me and handed me a glass.

"Err…..everyone, thank you. Okay then, cheers!"

""""Cheers!""""

Me, everyone, and of course Julie, drank from the glass.

The first taste of the wine was-----

"…….oh it's just juice"

"Well, it's non-alcohol champagne so, it's close"

"This isn't alcohol!?"

Tsukimi snapped.

Since Lilith's prank was a grand success, she placed her hands on her mouth and giggled.

"Seriously why would you lie……..."

"It's just a small prank. But, I get to see something interesting because of it"

The gold girl pointed at someone.

And that someone was----

*Wobble**wobble**wob*……Julie swaying from left and right .

Her white skin (Snow white) was blushing, her eyes were drooping as if it was melting and her eyes don't look focused.

"Looks like it's easy to put her to sleep, Fufu"

"Julie----------!?"

"Ja---……."

Pofuun. Julie collapsed like a doll with its strings detached.

Luckily, she fell onto my lap and did not hit her head on the floor but-----

Just like that, Julie fell asleep on my lap and started *Suu**suu* making sleeping sounds.

“Hey you! What are you doing to my husband in this confusion !?”

“Lilith you too, what are you saying in this confusion!?”

Some time has passed since the party started and we were playing the DX (Deluxe) life game that we borrowed from the lounge------ though I say this, Julie was sleeping on the bed and Sara was only looking at us play from behind.

“It’s my turn. Okay-----oh 3, appear, appear, appear!!.....”

Tachibana prayed hard and spun the roulette but----

“Kuh, 7 huh. ----fumu, a shopping block. Well, I guess I’ll stay with this”

“Fufu. Good for you, Tomoe-chan. Okay it’s my turn----Eii”

After a clatter, the roulette picked Miyabi’s fate.

“I did it! I hit the lottery and gained extraordinary income♪”

Miyabi clapped her hands and jumped in joy.

But, I was having a complex thought when I saw her like that.

There was a reason why I honestly wasn't happy about Miyabi's cheerful expression.

I heard from Tachibana that Miyabi was unlike herself and became hysteric in the dressing room after training, a few days ago.

She looks happy from what I see but, she might be forcing herself.

Even though I was worried, Tachibana made a complex statement that we shouldn't force Miyabi whose heart has yet to recover.

Because of that, I could not talk to her about the confession.

"Tooru-kun?"

Miyabi suddenly called me.

"Ah……er,wh-what?"

"It's your turn?"

"Eh? Aah, is that so. Sorry"

I apologized and quickly spun the roulette.

After some clatters, the numbers spun rapidly.

From what I got, I reached a block which would influence every other player and as a result, there were happy and unhappy people making noises.

Not long later-----

"Okay, goal!! Done it!"

I reached the goal by leaving it to my luck in the 2nd move.

Maybe it's because I laughed too hard, my throat feels dry.

I took my empty cup and headed over the corner of the room to refill the cup with juice.

"Ah, damn it. Why is it with this kiddy champagne. Come on, let me drink sake,"

Tsukimi, who was the first to score a goal, was at the side of the wall complaining while holding the cup with her mouth.

"For an underage girl, just what are you saying……also, stop sitting down with one knee up"

I looked away from the homeroom rabbit ear teacher and warned her.

"Hn? Getting horny?"

"Hell no!! Why are you here celebrating my birthday in the first place anyway"

"I told you it's because it's interesting. Also just like what I told you before, I took an interest to you"

Since she tried to kill me once before, there was no way I would believe her now even though she says that she has taken an interest to me.

(……but, she did protect everyone in class from the <<God's Destruction Team>> during the seaside school)

Judging by her battle maniac state she showed when she fought us, there was the possibility that she just wanted to fight.

(Now that I think about it)

The question that appeared in my mind appeared back from the depths of my memories when I was recalling back the events that occurred in the seaside school.

"Hey Tsukimi. I have one question for you"

"Arh, what is it?"

"Was the <<Power>> you used when you fought with those <<God's Destruction Team>> the <<Blaze>>'s real <<Power>>?"

"Well yeah. What about it?"

"…….one more question. Why didn't you use that <<Power>> in our fight-----"

"Yay, I got a goal♪"

"What the hell!!"

Miyabi's happy and Tora's shocked voice erased my words.

"Kuh, to think that I would taste the humiliation of being in the lowest place……."

Looks like Tora was at the lowest place.

"I won't accept this! One more time! Tooru, Tsukimi! We are going to fight again so get back here!!"

"……..You heard them. We will leave this talk for next time"

After saying that, Tsukimi tapped on my shoulders and made a sound like a kiss near my ears before turning her shoulders while walking towards everyone.

"Okay, time to kick your ass. Be prepared you little runt!!"

"Who the hell is a runt!!"

Tsukimi and Tora glared at each other when she sat down.

I thought this when I was looking at her back.

Why didn't Tsukimi use her real <<Power>> when she attacked us during the <<Newcomer battle>>.

If she really did it then, the match would easily be her win.

(Then why would she……..)

“What’s wrong, Tooru. Nothing will start if you don’t come over here♪”

“Oh, sorry. I am going now”

Lilith called me, maybe because she saw me daydreaming about something.

“Here, Tooru”

The gold girl pulled me up when I grabbed the hand she extended to me-----

Lilith joined our arms when I stood up.

Incidentally, my elbow was touching her breast.

“Li-Lilith”

“Time to start the second round, Tooru. I will make this my victory this time♪”

She winked and announced her victory.

“Uwah!? I-I get it so let go of my arm……!”

I pulled her for a few meters and returned back to the circle.

"See you again tomorrow morning"

"Go-good night, Tooru-kun……"

It was close to lights off when the 2nd life game ended.

The party ended and Tora, who shouted for 3 matches because he continuously gotten last place got dragged back to his room by Tatsu.

After cleaning up the room decorations without waking Julie up , Miyabi and Tachibana returned back to their room and I went out the room to send both of them off.

"Thanks, the both of you"

"Fufu. I was supposed to celebrate your birthday but it turned to celebrating our party"

"Haha, in a certain way, this was too much of a surprise for me"

"Seriously……."

"*Giggle* Tomoe-chan, your face was so red"

"Ple-please don't say that……."

Miyabi laughed happily at Tachibana, who was making a bitter face.

"Okay then, we'll be heading back now. Good night, Tooru-kun"

"Good night, Miyabi. Tachibana, you too"

"Umu. See you tomorrow"

Both of them walked back to their room through the corridor which has almost no one populating it.

While looking at their backs slowly getting further away, I recalled back the talk I heard from Tachibana about Miyabi's state during the party.

(Unlike herself, huh…….)

It has been 2 weeks since the <<God's Destruction[Libel] Team>> attack-----

It was long and short at the same time.

Julie's and mine wounds are almost at full recovery and Tachibana's legs got better.

However, no one can see how serious the wounds are in the heart.

That fact goes for the victim too.

"Tooru, what's wrong? Did you fall asleep while standing up?"

Lilith came out from the room and tapped my shoulders when I was daydreaming alone in the corridor.

“There’s no way I'd have such a skill”

“I can sleep with you if you need it you know?”

“Ri-----“

“Ri?”

“Really, please give me a break from those jokes”

That was close; I was close to saying “Right on time”….

“So it’s okay if I am serious?”

“Give me more of a break……..”

I found this out with my body a while back but, it seems Lilith can only sleep when she’s naked.

Since I couldn’t sleep because I get nervous whenever I sleep with Julie, there was no way I could sleep if she sleeps beside me naked.

---in the first place, there was enough possibility that butler could make him sleep for eternity.

"How disappointing. But if you want it then, you can call me anytime you want……of course, I am all for you coming to me too"

She winked + threw a kiss to me. I made a sigh and told her "I won't call you nor will I go to you" as a reply to her seduction that I had no idea if it was a joke or if she was serious about it.

"Leaving that aside. Despite being surprised today, I was happy , embarrassed, and more but, it was very fun"

I told her my thanks for hosting a birthday party for me.

"Actually…….my tension was a little low recently. That's why, I got to laugh a lot today, because you opened a party like this……it made me feel better. So----Thank you, Lilith"

"…….I see, then that's good. It's just by coincidence but, it turned out into a good surprise I see. But, rather than your thanks, I prefer----"

"What are you saying, Ojou-sama. There is no such thing"

A voice suddenly denied Lilith's words.

The owner of the voice was the butler-Sara.

From what I could see, she was looking at us with an unsatisfied expression.

[What do you mean by that, Sara?] [Sara!!]

Her master's stop flew at the same time when I asked her.

"I apologize but, I won't feel satisfied unless I tell this idiot this ……listen up, Kokonoe-sama. There is no way my wise Ojou-sama wouldn't notice you feeling down for these past few days. Today's party was hosted to cheer you up and at the same time to celebrate your birthday"

"Is that so……"

"…..Sara. You didn't have to say that"

"No, thanks for telling me. Thanks for doing this for me, Lilith"

"……y-you don't have to say it twice"

Over there wasn't the girl that always look carefree but instead---

The girl looked embarrassed and was curling her hair with her fingers; I almost thought Lilith was quite there for a moment.

Even though I always had the impression that she's beautiful, there wasn't a time when I felt that she was cute.

It was not only her appearance and gesture.

She would always approach me assertively to show her affections to me but right now, she was trying to act like her usual self to hide her real intentions and I felt that it was cute of her.

There was no way this gold girl would know that I was thinking that and she was still looking up at me awkwardly.

"…….you got cheerful right?"

"Yeah, it's not to full recovery but, quite so"

"You should have replied that you fully recovered. But, it's good that you got a bit more cheerful. You looked down for these past few days, you were even wobbly today too……..."

(……..It was because I couldn't sleep, thanks to Julie)

Of course, I didn't tell her that.

"But, Tooru. This might be weird for me to say this but, you should count on others when you are feeling down. I'll get unnecessarily worried if you keep quiet……..."

"Lilith……."

"Of course, there is nothing for me to say if you picked me to count on♪"

I felt apologetic since I was told by 2 girls to count on them in an oddly short period of time.

At the same time, I felt happy to know that there were trustworthy comrades that would worry about me.

"That's, true…….I'll do that the next time I feel depressed"

"*Giggle*, good that you know. Of course, I have nothing to say if you picked me to count on when the time comes…….Okay then, I'll be heading back to my room now. See you next week, Tooru"

Yellow Topaz

Lilith brushed her blonde hair before walking and her butler followed her from behind.

(Whether it's Julie or Lilith, I have been causing my surroundings worries……)

It was ironic that this person was worried about Miyabi.

And what's more, the person that hurt Miyabi was none other than me.

(Miyabi huh……)

I have to have a proper talk with her about her confession----

I might have a lot of reasons but, 2 weeks passed since the day at the sea.

(I can't delay this problem forever)

It's delicate problem so, we should talk when we're alone.

(The problem is, how I am going to get Miyabi to be alone with me……)

Just when I was thinking that-----

The time suddenly came.

I went back into the room and after looking at Julie sleeping comfortably, I thought “I guess I'm going to be sleeping on the top bed today” before the door was knocked.

Miyabi was standing there when I opened the door while wondering who it was.

“Sorry. I forgotten something”

It seems she forgotten her handkerchief when I asked her. Now that I think about it, I have memories of seeing her clean the underside of the wet cups several times in the party.

“Where’s Tachibana?”

“She wanted to follow but, I came back just to take my handkerchief and I’ll feel sorry if she came with me”

“I see. Then, give me a sec”

After saying that, I left the door open and entered the room, leaving Miyabi alone at the spot----

I immediately found the handkerchief and headed back to hand it over to her.

“Thank you, Tooru-kun. Okay good night again. Also, it’s might be too much to say this many times but----Congratulations”

“I’ll be happy no matter how many times you tell me that. Thanks, Miyabi”

After having her hands, Miyabi's appearance was covered by the door-----

"……."

*Batan*the moment the door fully closed, I moved out as if I was struck by lightning.

"Miyabi……!"

"Tooru-kun…….?"

After I opened the door, I saw Miyabi looking at me with a little surprised look.

"What's wrong…….?"

"Ah……..err……."

The silence continued for a while.

Miyabi was waiting for my words.

But, I was still hesitant even though I was the one that called out to her.

I unexpectedly gained the chance to be alone with her and talk about that day.

However, is it okay to talk to Miyabi about it now.

The wounds of her heart she got from that day might not have healed yet.

I hesitated-----

I soon made up my mind and talked.

"I have something to tell you; it's about the seaside school"

Miyabi twitched her body when she heard those words.

"On the day, at the sea----"

"E-errr…….! I have been thinking of talking about this with Tooru for the whole time too……..!"

Miyabi continued talking after interrupting me.

"Thank you for saving me……"

She was thanking me.

"I was really scared. It thought it was over, I thought I was going to get raped and nothing else----I was very happy when Tooru came to save me. But even so, I didn't thank you at all……"

That's not true.

It was a little but, I could hear the fear from being attacked by the <<God's Destruction[Libel] Team>> and her wounded heart when I reacted to her confession, in her thanks.

But, it was the same as not saying that for Miyabi.

After seeing my face, she only told me that she has been fretting over the fact that she couldn't thank me.

"I am really sorry. I always cause trouble to you……whether it' s during the Seaside school or the <<Survive>>, I would always drag Tooru-kun down……I am really sorry to confess to you when I am someone like that"

"At that time, I was----"

I was about to tell her that I was troubled about something else but when I tried to do so----

"But----***it's okay now***"

Miyabi's expression suddenly changed into a smile.

"I won't be weight anymore. ***I will protect you now***, Tooru-kun "

"Eh……?"

"I became strong. That's why, if anything happens to you next time, I will be one to protect you"

"Miya-bi…….?"

I felt goosebumps at my spine when I saw her smile.

Confidence and even chill could be felt from her smile.

No-----

The Hotaka Miyabi I know was not someone that can make this smile.

I don't know if the source was the unstableness Tachibana talked about or another reason but, I could feel that Miyabi was not like herself and was like a different person all together.

"*giggle*…..you don't believe me?"

"Uh...n-no……"

"Fufu. If that's the case, I will show you how strong I became……ah, I have to go back now. Good night Tooru-kun. See you again"

Miyabi ended the conversation and left when I was dumbfounded.

I stared at her jogging upstairs while recalling back the smile she showed during the conversation we just had.

(Just what happened to you, Miyabi……..?)

My heart was in turmoil.

I was driven by an indescribable uneasiness.

Part 2

"This is the thing you wanted…….?"

The Caucasian teenager---<<K>>, narrowed up his sharp eyes and directed it to a certain ***object***.

The lean old man--<<Equipment Smith>> standing in front of <<K>> who was the one that called him, lifted the sides of his mouth and nodded.

"Correct. These are the external weapons for your <<Unit>> to wear……but, I still need more time to complete it"

It will take 2 weeks including the testing phase-----those were the days the old man estimated.

He could then see the completion of the <<Unit>>.

However, it was still far from completion as the <<
God's Destruction soldier
Ell.Libel >>

Then, what was the part needed for completion?

The answer was already made up in the old man's mind and the step to reach there was already made; to add on, the next step was also decided.

"By the way, <<K>>-kun. What kind of business does Japan have with us? Don't tell me, they were curious about this incomplete machine and wanted to see it"

The <<Equipment Smith>> sat down the chair while saying that .

"Just as you guessed……it's a warning from the Board of Directors"

The organization <<K>> and the <<Equipment Smith>> was affiliated-----Gogmagog, was an illegal organization that does not exist in the public.

That's why, they have to restrain on strategies and actions that might bright the existence of the organization to light; even if those actions were seen by someone, if those were just small matters then, it could be buried into the darkness.

But however, the attack that was commenced 2 weeks ago----the <<Selection>> was a plan too large in scale.

Kouryou academy normally does not attract public eyes but, adding on with the frequent sounds of explosions, a part of the facility got burned and that turned into a giant bon fire, temporarily illuminating the dark night. It was only normal for this unusual incident to attract eyes since the academy was not on a far away and isolated island, even though it was surrounded by the sea.

However, even though the attack caused a commotion that might appear in the news; it was forgotten in the public world after a few days since----this incident occurred from a gas explosion and there was no one injured at all.

Another reason why the incident was forgotten was because a famous business company was found causing illegal transactions the next day.

The information manipulation was performed by, the Dawn Organization by the front, and Gogmagog at the back.

Even though their motives were in agreement, it was in a sense ironic that both the organizations were joining forces to conceal the attack.

"They said [It's true that we told you to let us know on how amazing the <<Unit>> is. However, don't burden it with dangers of exposing the organization's existence to light]. Because of that, they warned us to avoid personal actions from now on"

"Fuhahaha, what a laugh. So it means that I am sitting on a rocking chair huh. Those useless bunches, even though I have been blessing them with the <<Power>> I made"

Just like what the old man---Edward said, the organization's force expanded a lot in these 10 years thanks to the many weapons that he invented.

The board still gave Edward a warning even though they put his achievements into thought.

It was a decision made by combining all the concealed troubles made by the old man's personal actions, including the attack towards Kouryou academy.

"Changing topics. There is one errand I want you to do------"

"Is it okay?"

<<K>>'s words include the external meanings of "You will be ignoring the board's warning if you make any moves".

"I don't care. I don't plan on being tied up by boredom in the first place anyway. That's was why I threw away my old haunts"

"……..understood. Please tell me the contents"

Edward nodded and talked about his business.

The contents were simple but at the very least, <<K>> was going to be accompanied with danger.

"Can I give this matter to you, <<K>>-kun?"

"Obeying the <<Equipment Smith>>-dono's orders------is the mission given to me"

"Okay then, I am counting on you. However, please don't answer any questions. Tell them to ask me directly during the banquet"

"Noted"

As the old man's next move, the devil's servant took off.

In order to blow away the seed the devil planted.

After a while-----the <<Equipment Smith>> that was left alone in the room, mumbled to himself.

"Take a close look at this, Tsukumo, Bristol……I have reached this far…..i have finally done it……."

Dark happiness was filling the old man's heart while he was staring at the external equipment which was close to completion.

It was normal.

That's because the dream that can be said to be deep-rooted in him for many years was going to be reality.

There were times when he was laughed for being absurd.

There were also times when he was discarded from the gaps of his real intentions.

But even so, he came this far.

The wish he wanted for his whole life was about to be achieved.

Delight and several emotions swirled in his heart, and shook his heart and body.

The emotions that mixed together soon turned to madness and poured out like raging rapids from Edward as a loud laugh.

“Fu-Haha……..fuhahahaha!! Ha----haha!! Ha---hahahaha!!”

The devil laughed in the darkness.

He could not bear it any longer……

Chapter 4 『Why Won't You Look At Me?

Part 1

(Nothing strange could be felt, from what I could see……)

After finishing lunch, I looked at Miyabi who was walking further in front while using the road to the school from the dorm.

She was talking with Tachibana and was showing her usual smile that would sometimes appear. This wasn't the first time.

A few days has passed since the weekends but, Miyabi has not shown that face that gave me chills since that day.

That was why I was wondering.

Was that smile just a dream?

Because I had that thought, I did not talk to-----or even consult this with anyone.

Even though I thought that "will that uneasiness I felt at that time take shape if I talked about it", the chances for it to happen was considerably high.

I had a bad premonition.

I swung my head to stop the uneasiness arising in me.

"Tooru? What's wrong?"

"No, nothing at all"

I wish it would always be peaceful here.

I don't want it to be a fake.

When I wished that-----

"-----!!"

The wish broke at this moment.

A loud rotor sound and strong wind suddenly passed by our heads.

I gasped since it came from a giant helicopter.

That's because I saw this helicopter before.

After I saw this giant wheel type helicopter-----the helicopter that I saw during <<Survive>> again, I felt goosebumps around my whole body.

"Tooru!!"

After Julie shouted, it was almost at the same time that we started running towards the direction the helicopter was heading to----the school building.

[Tooru, Julie!?] [Tooru-kun!!]

Even though I could hear Tachibana's and Miyabi's voice from behind, we didn't stop our legs and headed towards the school.

"Tooru, that's…….!"

Julie, who was one step slower than me, did not stop her legs and asked for confirmation from me.

"Ahhh, it's those bastards------the <<God's Destruction[Libel] Team>> 's helicopters!!"

The bad premonition I had just now happened in a different form.

(Is it another attack!? Or another goal!? Damn it, I never would have imagined that they would infiltrate here when it's on full-alert and what's more right in the day……..!!)

Suspicion and impatience were pushing my back while we reached the helicopters landing spot----the hall in front of the school. There were already 5 security members at the hall, cautious about the helicopter.

But, the security team weren't the only ones at the hall.

There were around 20 students heading back to the school from the dorm because it was lunch time but, they were looking at the helicopter from a distance.

They just don't know.

They don't know that this helicopter belongs to the << God's Destruction (Libel) Team>> that caused fear and chaos to them.

(I have to tell everyone-----)

Whether they pick to run or fight, I have to change their mood before they are attacked unguarded.

However, those conscious (thoughts) disappeared the moment I saw one teenager with sharp eyes in the helicopter.

"<<K>>----------!!"

My voice which echoed in the sky got the attention from everyone in my surroundings.

"Long time no see------oh I guess it wasn't that long since we last met. It is an honor to meet you this fast, Kokonoe Tooru"

"I didn't want to see your face though…..!!"

I placed my hands on my chest------and while placing my hands on the <<Astar>> surfacing up, I spat out those words.

Julie standing beside me also surfaced her <<Astar>> so that she can manifest her <<Blaze>> anytime.

However, our surroundings were different. They might feel that a serious atmosphere was floating around us and <<K>> but, they were looking at us and were whispering speculations without understanding the situation.

It's probably because they couldn't feel any danger since <<K>> was not wearing his <<Unit>> and was in a neck tie and suit.

"Can you please not make such a scary face. Just like what you see now, I did not come here to fight you today"

Even though he made a docile appeal by spreading out his hands, we did not release our cautiousness. "…….It seems my welcoming party is here"

"Eh……..?"

<<K>> looked away from us and looked at the school's entrance.

I moved my sights there and saw the Kouryou academy chairman—the girl in black clothing's there.

Tsukimi and Mukini-sensei were with her and slowly walked out with gazes fixed at them.

"I apologize for not giving any service last time"

"No, I had enough fun…….okay"

Together with his last words, <<K>> looked towards me and smiled.

"Then I have no worries then. However, for the last event and also today, we originally would refuse your visit to the academy since you haven't received any permission from us beforehand"

"Oh well well, it seems we caused you great trouble even though I had no clue what it is"

<<K>> exaggeratedly bowed down; maybe it was to make us think he was polite and at the same time rude.

(Damn it, what do you mean by trouble, don't screw with me…….!!)

When I thought about the many blood-sheds that occurred at this entrance, I felt anger and couldn't forgive him for using a simple word like trouble.

At that moment, someone tapped my shoulders.

"Kokonoe. Is that guy……."

It was Tachibana.

It seems that she just reached the hall; she was still in crutches even though the cast was taken off already.

Behind her was Miyabi making a stiff face but, she was looking at me waiting for the answer.

"……He is <<K>>, the guy leading the <<
Libel
God's Destruction Team>>"

Miyabi's body twitched the moment the word <<
God's Destruction Team (Libel)>> came out. Tachibana's face looks gloomy when she saw Miyabi's reaction before saying "Like I thought" and asking me another question.

"Do you know what kind of goal this man has for appearing?"

"I don't know-----but, I think you two should take some distance at least. He might not be wearing his battle suit but, he is an unpredictable fellow"

I think it's going to be okay since Tsukimi and Mikuni-sensei are here but, this is just for the worst scenario.

"That might be a good idea. Miyabi let's get away from this place. If that person is planning on doing something then, we might drag others down when the time comes"

Miyabi swung her head to the side when Tachibana said that.

"……I will fight"

"--------!?"

"It's okay. Because I got stronger…….so it's okay. I will show you how much stronger I got, Tooru-kun"

After saying that, Miyabi smiled.

Miyabi was making the smile that gave me the chills from a few days ago.

"W-what's wrong with you, Miyabi……?"

Tachibana looked troubled at Miyabi, who was clearly acting weird.

Once again-----I became perplexed on what I should do, now that she shown that weird side of her.

However, in an unrelated matter, the conversation between the chairman and <<K>> was still ongoing.

"I will ignore that for today……okay then, can I ask you what kind of business do you have with us today?"

"I came here today to deliver a message from <<Equipment Smith>>-dono.------though I said that, it's the same contents he told you directly the last time"

"If it is about the alliance then, I refused on the spot already am I wrong?"

"It's just as you said-----but, more than 2 months have already passed. The <<Equipment Smith>>-dono asked for your confirmation again……..this time, I will be explaining a little more compared to last time"

The <<Equipment Smith>>---he is the <<
Libel
God's Destruction Team>> boss and the other existence other than

<<K>>, who is the captain of the executive team. It was someone that even the <<Exception>>---Lilith, who lives selfishly, was not permitted to talk about------

(An alliance with him you say…….?)

They attacked us twice-------and on top of that, there were deaths too; just what were they thinking to talk about the alliance in a situation like that.

Adding on with Miyabi's weird state, my thoughts turned even more messed up when I heard the negotiation that's out of my comprehension.

"A further explanation huh. I get to hear the continuation?"

"Just like the <<Power>> we <<God's Destruction Team>> (Libel) shown last time, our bodies were enhanced by the battle suits called the <<Unit>>. We were powered up to the extent that were able to fight against your-the <<Blaze Witch>> (Blaze Diabolica)'s prided <<Exceed >>"

"……..Kuhah. Even though you said fight against, you lot were barely hanging on against a bunch of <<III>> brats"

Tsukimi shook her rabbit ears and snorted. Her soft voice clearly reached everyone who was watching the conversation while they were holding their breaths, and nervousness was floating in the air.

Of course, it reached <<K>> too-----

"Yes, it's just as you said…….in the current stage though"

He did not deny it and made a smile that does not look like he was putting up a front before adding one last word.

"But, try thinking about this. We might be trained solders but, we are still human. However----"

<<K>> looked around before looking back at the chairman.

"Just imagine how high we would reach if someone that transcends humans were to put on a <<Unit>>. How about it? That is what you and the <<Equipment Smith>>-dono aimed-----"

"…..not interested. I have my own beliefs. After you go back, please tell that to him too"

"Fufu. Your will is very strong……but, I just can't leave yet"

After saying that, <<K>> put his hands into his pocket and Mikuni-sensei covered the chairman when he saw him did so.

"Relax. There is something I want to show you"

After taking something out from his pocket-----

"……luckily, all the actors are here"

No, <<K>> pointed his sharp eyes towards the person beside me.

"Eh……?"

Their eyes met, and Miyabi opened her eyes wide in surprise.

"Congratulations. You are the glorious proto-type combination of the <<Unit>> and <<Blaze>>"

While making a cold smile, <<K>> showed the switch he took out from his pocket.

"---------!!"

I felt something connecting and electricity shook my spine.

The words <<K>> said was related to the smile Miyabi showed which gave me a slight chill.

I perceived that with my six-sense.

"S-stop…..!"

I don't know what <<K>> done to Miyabi.

But, my heart was telling me to stop him so-----

"Stoooooooooooooooooooop……..!!"

I shouted and extended my hands.

But----that was all I could do.

"Show them your----<<Power>>"

Click. A mechanical sound could be heard and-----

"…….ah-aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhh!!"

Suddenly, a shout strong enough to split my ears appeared.

When I turned over, I saw the accessory on Miyabi's neck pouring out some kind of black cloth and wrapping it onto her body. Her chest, fingers, legs, and even toes were covered in a thick layer and its appearance made her look like a cocoon------ right after the accessory stopped producing the cloth, the black cloth dispersed and turned to dust.

"Mi-Miya-bi….?"

After seeing Miyabi appearing out from the black cloth, either it was I or Tachibana that was the one that let out a husky voice.

I was so shocked that I lost my senses to distinguish the sound.

That's because I couldn't believe that the girl in front of me was Miyabi.

In this area occupied mostly by people in student uniforms, she was the only one in a weird outfit.

The battle suit mainly black in color, fit her body and emphasized her female body line but on the other hand, there were boorish armor guards covering her limbs.

Also-----she was wearing a headgear and the visor was covering her eyes.

The visor was half-transparent and I'm able see her face if I got closer to her.

But even so, I and most likely Tachibana just couldn't bring ourselves to accept that the girl in battle suit in front of us was Miyabi.

No. We didn't want to believe.

That's because, the headgear worn by this girl looks exactly like the equipment worn by the opponent----the <<God's Destruction Team>> commander <<K>>, that we fought with our lives at stake.
Libel

I wasn't the only one who felt the impact when she turned like that. The surrounding students felt it too.

Even though they couldn't understand anything at first, they noticed the familiar headgear and a ripple of shock and discomposure was spread out.

[Oi, isn't that……..] [This is a joke, don't tell me that's……….!?] [There's no mistake……..!]

Right when the students were frozen in place without any clue on what to do, <<K>> opened his mouth.

"Okay, the time to achieve your wish has now come. Show him as you like.------the <<Power>> that can kill gods, that you obtained!!"

"--------!!"

Opposite the visor, Miyabi opened her void eyes.

"A…….aaa-ahh-aaaa-aaaaaaaah……."

"J-just what happened to you, Miyabi! Why are you wearing something that abominable-------"

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh----------!!"

Right when Tachibana slightly shook her shoulders, Miyabi shouted loudly.

"Miya……..bi.....!?"

"Move aside……."

"Eh……?"

Tachibana became blank when Miyabi said that.

"I told you to move aside, Tomoe-chan……because, you're in my way……."

"Wha……..what are you saying, Miyabi……..?"

"……<<Blaze>>"

The <<Word that carried strength>> was said in front of Tachibana when she was being blank-----

After the <<Flames>> danced, a giant <<Chivalry Lance lance>>, easily over 2 meters, appeared in Miyabi's hands.

Bikiiiii!! Next, the <<Chivalry Lance lance>> was swept and together with a dullish sound, Tachibana was blown away.

Tachibana was unable to block the attack and fell down on the stone pavement.

"Uu-gu….a-aag……..."

Everyone in the hall was silently looking at her groaning on the ground----

It immediately turned to a state of terror.

While there were people who ran away while shouting in panic, there were also people who grabbed onto their <<Blaze>>.

The security guards and several students jumped at Miyabi.

However-------they got warded off easily.

There fangs did not reach her; after the <<Chivalry Lance lance>> was swung for the 2nd and 3rd time, everyone was on the ground.

It was an overwhelming <<Power>>--------

I just stood there blankly because I didn't think that the scenery in front of me was reality.

"Sorry, Tooru-kun. Did I make you wait……..?"

Through the visor, Miyabi made a wry smile apologetically.

That voice definitely belongs to the girl I knew.

"What……..what are you doing…...Do you know what you did to Tachibana and everyone huh, Miyabi----!!"

"……because, everyone was in my way"

In the hall filled with shout and screams, Miyabi answered me with a tone so soft that I might miss it if I didn't pay attention.

"You, know. I want to show my <<Power>> to you, Tooru-kun. I told you last time right, I will show you how much stronger I got ……..but even so, Tomoe-chan and everyone were in my way……so, I had no choice"

Is this girl in front of me really Miyabi.

The Miyabi I knew would never have such empty eyes.

She won't say that her friends are in her way.

More importantly------

"Okay, now that there isn't anyone else in my way-------"

Impossible; there is no way she would make a distorted smile after hurting someone else.

"Just like what I promised, let me show you my <<Power>>, Tooru-kun!!"

Just like what she said, she carried the <<Chivalry Lance lance>> which usually took both her hands to finally carry, with just one hand and-----swung it down.

"-----, crap…….!!"

The attack got closer when I was late to respond-----

"Tooru!!"

Gooouu!! The stone pavement broke and the ground shook.

I was-----safe.

Julie immediately pushed me down and protected me from the <<Chivalry Lance lance>>.

"Are you okay, Tooru"

"Y-yeah. Sorry"

"Nai. It's okay since you aren't hurt"

Even though we were talking to each other, we stood up without looking away from Miyabi.

"……..don't get in my way, Julie-chan. Do you want to end up like Tomoe-chan?"

"Nai. Even if this is Miyabi's words, I won't forgive you for hurting Tooru"

Julie looked slightly mad to Miyabi who said it in an irritated voice.

"Hurt? There is no such thing. I only want to show him how strong I have become"

Even though 1 minute hasn't passed since she hit Tachibana away with her <<Chivalry Lance>> and treated her like hindrance, the girl said it as if nothing happened at all.

"Just like this----look!!"

She repeated a straight line attack again----but, I blocked it with my <<Shield>> this time.

(Kuh, this is Miyabi's power huh…….!?)

The force was so strong that my body might get blown away from the impact if I didn't lower my legs and hips.

I couldn't hide my shock from the attack's weight even though it looks like she was just swinging recklessly.

"*Giggle* finally. I finally can show Tooru-kun this. If I get you to believe that I got stronger by showing much more of my << Power>>-----it will be my turn to protect Tooru-kun"

Attacking the person that should be protected-----

Isn't she aware of her illogical comment?

Miyabi made a distorted smile again and said this.

"Well then, I will show you more of my power okay, Tooru-kun"

"Wha!?"

The <<Chivalry Lance>> remained pushing the <<Shield>> and Miyabi started pouring more strength, just like what she proclaimed.

"Guh…….Kuah……..!!"

I pushed back to Miyabi who was pressing down onto me.

This was just a simple push-----basically, it's a simple power comparison.

But, the <<II>> Miyabi was gradually pushing me, who's a <<III>> back.

(Th-this is the <<Power>> of the <<Unit>>……!! This is bad, if this keeps up then----"

I would get blasted away this time.

The moment I thought that, Julie swung her <<Twin Double blades>> up from under the <<Chivalry Lance>>.

Together with the strong sound of metals clashing, she lost the balance of the <<Chivalry Lance lance>> and was flung upwards.

"Mou……..I told you not to get in my way, Julie-chan…….!"

Miyabi looked angry when Julie interfered.

At that time-----

"Kokonoe Tooru"

The chairman's voice cut into the area.

"It looks like Hotaka Miyabi is obsessed with you. Then I will leave this place----and her to you"

That would mean that Tsukimi, Mikuni-sensei and the security guards won't interfere.

"I understand, I will take full responsibility and stop Miyabi….!!"

I did not look away from Miyabi and replied back to the chairman.

Julie then stood in front of me and covered me.

"Tooru, please stand back"

"I can't do that. We have to stop Miyabi or-----"

"That's exactly why. We need the <<Blaze>> to stop Miyabi"

It's true that my <<Shield>> can't do anything without harming her.

---leaving only one method left.

However, it won't be achieved unless someone gets close to her but, there was no way I could leave this to Julie alone because of that reason.

"Okay I get it. But at least let me support you, I am Julie's << Duo>> after all"

"I understand. I am counting on you……..let's go!!"

"Alright!!"

We ran towards Miyabi at the same time.

I placed my <<Shield>> towards the <<Chivalry Lance lance>> which was swung down-----

This time, after diverting it down to the ground, broken small rocks scattered about and hit my body.

Julie took this chance to jump into Miyabi chest area and swung her <<Twin Double blades>> but, she dodged it by twisting her body and at the same time, she lifted her <<Chivalry Lance lance>> before performing a counter. But, Julie jumped up and slashed down the same time when she was falling down.

Gikiii!! But, it was guarded by the handle and Julie got pushed away just like that. However, since it was Julie's merit of having a light body, she turned her body mid air and landed as if nothing happened. But, she was easily blown 5 meters away.

"Let's continue, Tooru-kun. Please look when no one is in my way, look, hey I told you to look at me more!! More more more more!!"

Her goal was only fixed at me and she came attacking me by swinging her <<Chivalry Lance lance>>.

Miyabi was using the power she showed just now as she pleased, and she continued swinging the weapon which doesn't feel like a heavy-weight weapon.

She was swinging it around like a light weighted rod, but actually, since each of the attacks were deadly, cold sweat would flow down each time I block them-----

*Clap**clap**clap*……an applause that doesn't fit in place echoed throughout the hall.

"Fufu, how magnificent. She power up wonderfully"

"<<K>>, what did you do to Miyabi!?"

"We just gave her the <<Power>> of the << God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel >> ----that's all. In the first place, the person that gave her that wasn't me but rather it was <<Equipment Smith>>-dono"

"……oh my, from what I could see, it looks like she is mind-controlled-----or maybe something close right?"

(Mind-controlled.……!?)

I looked at <<K>> in reflex when I heard the words the chairman said.

Looking away from the opponent in a fight would obviously result in a big mistake.

I failed to dodge the groaning thrust and a ***splash of red*** splashed up to the blue sky when my shoulder was grazed.

"-----!?"

Miyabi did not miss me losing my composure and turned while pulling back her <<Chivalry Lance lance>> before bashing the side of my head with the handle. I was blown away and I saw Miyabi charging towards me when I fell on a guy who was looking at us from a distance, thus dragging him into the mess.

(Crap…….!!)

It was natural to dodge, but not blocking it would result in danger to the guy.

Also, the worst possible outcome was also valid.

That's because-----right now, Miyabi's safety was released.

The <<Blaze>> is the weapon manifested by one's <<Soul>>----

Because of that, no one will be harmed unless killing intent is poured in.

However, the warm blood flowing down my head and shoulder , were telling me that her heart of not harming anyone was not working and was just a story.

"Get away!!"

I pushed away the guy that got dragged into this.

After I heard him call my name, the tip of the spear approached me.

I crossed my arms in reflex-----

Gyariiiii!! Just like a replay of the event that happened in the <<New blade battle>>, the <<Chivalry lance>> and <<Shield>> clashed.

Newcomer battle

Lance

But, the conclusion was in the complete opposite. Forget stopping in place, I lost the sensation of my foothold and got slammed towards the stone pillar at the school entrance. Leaving aside the base of the top of the stone pillar, everything else was destroyed by the strong impact.

"Gu-uu……"

Inside the dust, after i got up while my whole body was trembling from the pain, my sights suddenly turned dark.

The girl in battle suit was standing in front of me, blocking the sunlight while looking down to me.

Miyabi leveled her sights with mine and touched my cheeks.

"*giggle*…….how about it, Tooru-un. I am completely different from before right? From now on I will------"

The continuation of her words was blocked by the 2 echoing gunshots.

Miyabi, who was in front of me, took a hit at the head and chest before getting blasted behind.

"Hey you! I don't know who you are but what are you doing to my husband?"

Lilith appeared from the school while spinning the <<Rifle>> in her hand.

"Good morning, Tooru. Or should, good timing be a better choice?"

Lilith said she was going to take a small rest after lunch and went to do her thing but-----

"Miyabi!!"

I did not respond to the gold girl and shouted to the girl who fell onto the stone pavement with her back first.

"Ah, Tooru!! At least thank me for helping you in a pinch…….. wait, Miyabi!? Wha-what's going on!?"

Surprise was revealed on Lilith's face after I called out to and she looked at Miyabi who was getting up.

The headgear and visor broke by the impact of the bullet and her real face was exposed.

"No way……..!? It's really Miyabi……..!!"

"That bastard----<<K>> is mind-controlling her!!"

"J-just what is going on here…….!?"

Even Lilith couldn't hide her bewilderment at the situation.

"Oh look what we have here, well if it isn't Miss Bristol. It looks like Kokonoe Tooru misunderstood something but, we only gave her a choice-----she was the one that wanted <<Power>>…….. though, the <<Unit>> given to her has the function of clouding the user's decision-making by strengthening their wishes"

"Don't screw with me!!"

I lost to anger and ran towards <<K>> but-----

"Fuu. She got offended because you wanted to fight me"

Miyabi stood between me and <<K>>.

"Kuh! Move aside, Miyabi! Why must we fight…..!?"

But my voice didn't reach her.

"Why……..? Same thing goes to you too, Tooru-kun, why won't you look at me? I became this strong but why? Why Why Why Why Why Whyyyyyy!!"

"I have no clue on what's going on but, I'll stop you from moving for now, Miyabi!!"

Even though she couldn't grasp the situation, Lilith pulled the trigger to stop Miyabi, who was charging at me.

3 continuous gunshots echoed----but, Miyabi who now has body power worth fearing after wearing the <<Unit>>, saw through the bullets path and blocked it with her <<Chivalry Lance>>. Of course, she did not stop charging but instead she accelerated even faster.

Julie's Silver Blonde hair fluttered when she ran towards Miyabi from the side.

"Miyabi, please stop it already…….!!"

Even though it was to stop her, Julie swung her sword with a sad expression because she had to attack her friend.

Miyabi stabbed the <<Chivalry Lance>> into the ground and performed a pole vault to the air to dodge the straight slash. After taking away Julie's mid-air specialty, Miyabi send a sharp and cold glare to her before----kicking her.

Julie was unable to dodge the kick and took a direct hit.

She might have a small body but, she tumbled on the stone pavement for 2 and 3 times----

The moment it was about to reach the 4th time, Tachibana caught her properly.

With one of her arms limping, Tachibana distorted her expression from the impact she got from catching Julie and shouted.

"Please stop this Miyabi!! Why! Why would you do this to your friend!! You aren't someone that would do something like this!!"

"What do you mean by why…….You sure say some weird stuff huh, Tomoe-chan. I have been saying this from just now. I just wanted to show Tooru-kun my <<Power>>, now that I became stronger"

"<<That Unit>> isn't your <<Power>>!! That is just something you borrowed; please don't call that your <<Power>>, Miyabi!!"

There was someone making a sneer when Tachibana shouted in anger and sadness.

"Fufu, Hahaha! Borrowed, now that's one interesting way to put it. Of course for you, didn't everyone else in this place excluding the <<Blaze Witch>>-dono, transcend by borrowing the <<Power>> called <<Lucifer>>? That's basically plating the <<Unit>> with-----"
Blaze Diabolica

"Quiet, <<K>>!!"

"……Houu, are you saying that it's different?"

Suuu <<K>>'s sharp eyes narrowed.

His light smile did not disappear and asked for the continuation.

"It's true that at first, I thought the exact same thing. That, we obtained a borrowed <<Power>> called <<Lucifer>>…….but-----"

I brushed off <<K>>'s sights by glaring back and shouted.

"But it's different now! I found out that, the <<Lucifer>> won't sublimate unless we improve ourselves more!! The <<Power>> gained from effort, suffering and regret isn't called borrowed <<Power>>! It's called real <<Power>>!!"

I moved my sights to Miyabi and told her.

"And….the person that taught me that------was you Miyabi"

"Me……?"

Miyabi responded to me when I called her name and I nodded.

"You kept running every day. In order to become faster than yesterday as much as possible…….you're now able to run the distance that you couldn't finish at first. That's why you were able to become <<Level 2 II>>…….however, you couldn't reach <<Level 3 III>>
"

"……"

Even though Miyabi's face turned gloomy, I continued talking.

"To me, the <<Lucifer>> sublimation is just a prize for working hard but-------it's something like the combination of all the efforts we paid daily. That's why, I think that is real <<Power>>…… but, Miyabi. What is that <<Power>> you gained? Did you want to show me that borrowed power; that fake power to me!?"

"Uu……..a-aah……I…….I……"

"Don't rely on a fake! The reason why you're able to run fast now is because you worked hard every day right! Believe in the <<Power>> you gained through effort!! Believe in the strength of your heart that was able to make you continue that effort!!"

"I-I want…..Po-wer…….i want……to become…….. powerful and show……."

"I believe it!! I believe the strength of your heart Miyabi!!"

The girl fell because she got charmed by the devil because of her weakness.

But I believe in the real strength that would overcome that weakness.

“Take back the strength of your unyielding heart, Miyabi-----!!”

I shouted my wish and the air shook-----

It shook Miyabi’s <<Soul>>.

“Tooru-kun……I…….”

Light returned back into her void eyes.

“Miyabi!!”

But-----

“U-uuu……..!! aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa----------!!”

But it only lasted an instant.

The same time the object on her chest flickered, Miyabi shouted in pain.

“Ah……hnn, a-aah…….Too-ru-kun…….”

“Miyabi, are you alright!?”

"Look……at me……."

"-------!!"

While making a painful expression, Miyabi held up the <<Chivalry Lance>> at her hips.

The tip was fixed pointed right at me.

"Here..I come……To-oru…….kun….!"

Miyabi kicked the ground.

"Tooru!!"

I stopped Lilith and shouted.

"Don't lose to that fake <<Power>>, Miyabi----------!!"

I did not move at all when Miyabi was charging at me and stared right at her while believing her.

Our sights clashed instantly------

Right after Miyabi had a painful and confused expression; she closed her eyes and shouted.

"Uuaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa---------!!"

Even though the tip lost some of its momentum-----

ZuGuun!! The <<Chivalry Lance>> pierced deep into me.

"Guh, Kahah……..!!"

She stopped right when half of the spear was buried inside my chest.

I collapsed while it was stabbed into my chest.

"Ah……"

Miyabi's face looked confused at the action she has just done.

"Aa-ah…….To-Tooru-kun……..Noooooooooooooo!!"

Her scream echoed.

"Tooru-kun!! I……..I, what have I…….n-no, Tooru-kun please don't die, Tooru-kuuuuuuuun!!"

Miyabi made a scream filled with regret and pain.

With the <<Chivalry Lance lance>> pierced into me-----I lifted my face and smiled.

"You've done it, Miyabi……..."

"Eh……..? Too-ru-kun…..you're alive…….?"

"Aah, I am alive……..that's because, Miyabi…….you won against the fake……."

Yes, Miyabi won.

There was not even one drop of blood at the tip of the <<Lance Chivalry lance>>, which was thrusted into my chest.

Even though she didn't stop her charge, Miyabi was able to seal the (her) killing intent when she regained consciousness.

"Uu-n……..I couldn't do it alone……..it's because, Tooru-kun……..believed me, and that's why, i----------"

Mid-way through her words, the object on her chest flickered again.

That egg-shaped object stuck on her chest-----

The device that poured out and equipped the <<Unit>> on Miyabi was flickering.

"----Ah…….!?"

Miyabi suddenly pulled out the <<Chivalry Lance lance>>.

"Miyabi…….?"

"U-uu……..my body is moving on……its own……no……! Run away, Tooru-kun……..!!"

She aimed the <<Chivalry Lance lance>> at me again after pulling it out.

(That device is the one controlling Miyabi…..!? If that's the case----)

Miyabi would be freed from the <<Power>> of the <<Unit>> if I destroyed that.

However, my <<Blaze>> is a <<Shield>>.

It's not a weapon to destroy the device without hurting Miyabi.

But, there's a way.

Even though it's an equipment meant for blocking, my <<Shield >> is still a <<Blaze>>.

"I will save you now…….Miyabi!!"

To make that happen, I stood up and made a stance even though I was wobbly.

The <<Unit>> moved Miyabi's body.

The moment she was about to stab me again with the << Chivalry Lance >>----

I stepped towards the tip.

The tip was deflected by my <<Shield>> and slightly went off course-----

At the same time, I twist my body and slipped into Miyabi's chest area.

I pushed the <<Shield>> to Miyabi; more specifically I was pushing to the device on her chest.

I then pulled my arm back like pulling back an arrow.

“Miyabi, believe in me……..I will definitely---save you!!”

“U-uun……I believe you. I believe that Tooru-kun will save me ……..!!”

Miyabi smiled.

That is the smile I knew.

So I nodded.

I released the power and performed <<Thunder god’s strike>> (Mjolnir) on the inner side of the <<Shield>>.

I used it with my palm and not with my fist; the impact was passed through the <<Shield>>-----it’s a shield bash.

The transmitted impact destroyed the <<Power>> of the <<Ell.Libel (God’s Destruction soldier)>>.

Without harming Miyabi at all.

“Thank you……..Tooru-kun…….”

I stopped Miyabi from falling.

Although she was unconscious, I confirmed her breathing; whether she was breathing normally before I exhaled in relief.

Looking at that, *Clap**clap**clap*……an applause was given to me to celebrate this conclusion.

“Wonderful. I never would have thought that you could defeat her without harming at all……is that the “Protect” phrase you told me about?”

“Aah, that’s right.------but, I'm going over there to give you a good punch….!!”

After leaving the fainted Miyabi to Lilith, I got closer to the person that applauded----<<K>> while wobbling over to him.

“Fufu, sadly my goal has already been achieved. I will take my leave now”

“Don’t screw with me!! There’s no way I would go “Oh, is that so” and let you go back, after you caused something like this!!”

But unlike my energy, my feet were unstable and my view was hazy.

Although the <<Chivalry Lance lance>> did not take my life, my << Soul> was deeply injured.

Each time I closed my eyes, it was probably impossible to maintain my consciousness.

But even so, I took a step towards <<K>> and another one after that before----

I swung my fist.

However, forget using <<Thunder god's strike(Mjolnir)>>, it was so weak that calling it a punch was wrong.

My powerless fist, tapped on <<K>>'s chest.

"Damn…….it……."

Forget punching him away, <<K>> did not move even for a bit; and I spat my anger and regret at him.

"Fufu, this is exactly the phrase a mere shadow of one's former self but-----one hit is still one hit right……..!!"

The moment <<K>> touched my fist, my whole world turned upside down.

Just when I thought that I saw the blue sky, a strong impact attacked my whole body-----and my body turned hazy.

I regained my consciousness during the evening------I was on top of the infirmary's bed.

Of course, it was after <<K>> left the academy------

I swung my fist down at the bed with anger and resentment.

Part 2

"Ah……re…….where is……?"

Miyabi woke up during the afternoon of the next day after <<K >> left the academy.

Her view was pure white, and faster than her realizing that it was the ceiling, a voice that she heard the most in these few months called out to her.

"You woke up huh, Miyabi"

"Tomoe-chan……? Errr……."

Miyabi's memories were in disarray; she could not understand the situation and Tomoe continued smiling at her.

Normally, Tomoe should be in class but she managed to convince the academy that she had to be with Miyabi as her << Duo>>, and was with her since yesterday.

Of course, Miyabi had no means of knowing that fact since she was sleeping the whole time; she raised her body while her thoughts were still hazy.

"Wait, you shouldn't raise your body----------"

"Where is this place…….?"

Tomoe's stop did not reach Miyabi and her hazy thoughts, and after she raised her body, she looked around the room.

From what she could see, she knew that this wasn't her room.

Although the room was white and clean, the room looked a little mechanical; Miyabi has a past of coming to this room but, she couldn't reach that far with her consciousness right now.

"……It's the infirmary. There were no other wounds other than the one you got from the <<Blaze>> but, you were sent here for a check up just in case"

"Check up……..?"

Why was she in the check-up room, though she asked that question, she looked at her <<Duo>> and----- For the first time, she noticed Tomoe's arm covered in bandages.

"-----!!"

Suddenly, all of her memories came back as if she got struck by lightning.

The memories of the smiling old man that gave her the << Power>>.

The memories of being possessed by the <<Power>> she gained .

The memories of her swinging that <<Power>> and hurting Tooru, Tomoe and other Kouryou academy students; everything came back.

"A……..a-aah…….! I……what have I…….!!"

Miyabi held her head and got horrified at the things she has done.

Tomoe brought her free arm and hugged Miyabi.

"It's already over"

"But…….but……!"

"It's okay…….though I said that, there's no way you wouldn't be concerned huh. But this is probably a punishment for the foolish me…….who wasn't looking properly at my precious friend called Hotaka Miyabi, my <<Duo>>-----no, even if you aren 't my <<Duo>>"

"Punishment, no way……it was my fault for listening to the old man, and believing that the fake <<Power>> was my own strength ……."

"Believing is putting it wrongly. It seems that the <<Unit>> has a function that can control thoughts to a certain extent"

Miyabi swung her head even though she heard the words <<K> > said.

"However……..! At first it was different……It was because I was weak……that I used that <<Power>>…….and hurt Tomoe-chan, Tooru-kun and many people…….!!"

Miyabi properly has the memories of wearing the <<Unit>>.

"We only gave her a choice-----she was the one that wanted <<Power>>"

The words <<K>> said were correct.

The thirst for power was born from her lack of strength and as a result, she pressed the switch.

"It's because I am weak……."

Teardrops moistened her cheeks. That's because tears were falling off Miyabi's eyes.

Tomoe hugged Miyabi harder and swung her head before talking gently.

"No one is strong from the start. Everyone is weak at the beginning. That goes for me, Kokonoe, and everyone too. And it's not like I am strong now too. I'm just trying to be stronger"

Tomoe couldn't make the judgment that her voice was reaching Miyabi, whose shoulders were trembling and wasn't lifting her face.

But even so, Tomoe continued talking about the things she thinks about regularly.

"Humans are weak. Because we are weak, there are times we make mistakes. But-----I think it's important to make a choice during the time we notice the mistake……just like what I said just now, this event was not only your fault, it's mine too. So-----"

After taking a small distance, Tomoe intentionally use a stronger tone for her next words.

"I want to become stronger"

Miyabi's body twitched without her lifting her face.

Tomoe did not refer to it and talked with a voice as gently as possible.

"I want-----the strength to step closer to a friend's heart, the strength to help my friend in trouble, the strength to accept the faces of new friends that I don't know about"

The strength she described was different from the strength that Miyabi got tempted by.

Tomoe wished for the strength of bonds and something even more than that.

"That's why Miyabi. Will you stay as my <<Duo>> from now on? Will you hold the feeling of getting stronger in your heart with me? Will you help straighten my path if I was led astray? Will you----become my real friend?"

The person to choose Tomoe's wish, which could be also called as desire, was Miyabi.

Take Tomoe's hand and stay in Kouryou academy.

Swing her head to Tomoe and leave Kouryou academy.

Miyabi made a choice.

"I------"

Chapter 5 『If The World is Filled With Malice

Part 1

It was extreme lonely on the evening I regained consciousness.

Miyabi, who was still unconscious, and Tachibana who went to the infirmary to look after her, have not come back yet.

While everyone was having a heavy-atmosphere meal without talking, the conversation from the surroundings entered my ears-------I found out that the incident in the afternoon has already spread out.

It looks like the source of the information was the students that were at the hall; the fact that we fought Miyabi in a <<Unit>> was spread out. Thanks to that, several speculations and glances were directed to us and we had to pass the time uncomfortably.

Our meal soon ended and right after we got out from the cafeteria, I asked Lilith something.

"Please tell me about the <<God's Destruction[Libel] Team>> and their boss- the <<Equipment Smith>>"

Now that Miyabi was used for their plan, the situation now is different from before.

Even if we can't do anything about it, I want to gain as much info about the enemy as possible.

"I'll treat you all some milk tea. Come to my room"

After only replying that, Lilith took Sara and went back to her room; I followed her with Julie and Tora behind me.

In Lilith's room which was located at the 3rd floor, the curtains and furniture were replaced with high-class ones and the room was giving off a very different brilliance although it had the same structure as the other dorm rooms.

Originally, I was supposed to feel nervous for entering a girl's room but, my feelings were far from that now.

Lilith kept quiet even though she reached her room, and the room was filled with the heavy-atmosphere just like what we had in the cafeteria just now.

After awhile, Sara distributed the milk tea to everyone and only then, Lilith finally opened her mouth.

"It's Dawn's confidential secret regarding him. That's why, my answer is the same as last time. Don't make me say it twice"

"…….so basically, you aren't going to tell us"

After taking a sip of milk tea, [Yes, that's right] Lilith nodded.

"Fuun. You told us to come all the way to your room and that's it huh, what a waste of energy……!!"

Tora stood up in anger when he heard the words Lilith said after a long silence.

"Oh my, you're not drinking the milk tea?"

"No need! Tooru, Julie, let's go!!"

I understand Lilith's position but, since I also understand Tora's feeling for getting enraged, I was about to leave the room after i given up trying to gain info of the enemy.

"Sorry, Lilith. I'll take your treat next time okay"

"I see. How disappointing"

After saying that, Lilith took up her cup----

"This is mumbling to myself-----"

She suddenly said that without looking at us.

"<<Equipment Smith>>-----his real name is Edward Walker, an expert of Mechanical Engineering; he's an enthusiastic person that develops engine and propulsion systems, while on the other hand he develop things like artificial muscles……..if I remember correctly"

"Ojou-sama……!"

"This is just a mumble to myself. Don't make me say it twice, Sara"

The butler flat out said that in panic but, Lilith told her to quiet down instead.

"Okay, time to continue my mumbling"

Hearing those words, me and Julie looked back at Lilith and Tora folded his arms while leaning his back at the wall.

"I heard that he talked about an exo-skeleton suit that will overturn common sense and his surroundings did not understand him because of that"

The exo-skeleton suit was most likely the <<Unit>>.

"12 years ago, he suddenly disappeared from the organization he was affiliated with----and ever since then, his whereabouts were unknown until the time he showed himself at the <<Survive>>. Most likely, he introduced himself to the organization that the << God's Destruction (Libel) Team>> are currently affiliated with------the Gogmagog I think?"

Lilith took a sip of the milk tea before continuing.

"The Gogmagog is a secret organization tied to America's military. However, they are mainly devoted to developing military weapons and with that power behind them, it's an organization that has the highest influence in current North America…… unlike the Dawn Organization, it does not have a surface and I wonder if the fact that they're doing nasty things is true, I wonder? "

Lilith took another sip and sigh before I asked a question.

"…….Why is that <<Equipment Smith>> fellow treated as the organization's confidential secret?"

Lilith looked down at the milk tea and mumbled.

"Edward was originally Dawn Organization's development bureau number 2"

We gasped when we heard those unexpected words.

"On top of leaving the organization, after he was confirmed to have introduced himself to the enemy organization, the whole organization went into ruins. What's more, he deleted all of the in-development data, data of completed developments and of course his personal data too when he left……thanks to that, the whole organization was in chaos…….seriously it was one annoying event"

After making a sigh, Lilith faced foward and opened her eyes wide.

"Oh my, why if isn't Tooru. You came to drink milk tea I guess"

With that one sentence, Lilith has implicitly ended the talk.

"Aah. I want the others to know about Sara's milk tea too. Both of you sit down, it's exquisite"

[Ja---. I'll drink] [Fuun. Well……..I guess I'll join in]

After Julie and Tora sat down, Sara made another batch of milk tea.

Around the afternoon on the next day-------even though it was still class time, there was a broadcast in the school.

Just when I wondered what it was, my name was called out to head to the chairman office during lunch time.

What's more, I was not the only one that was call out; Julie, Lilith, Tachibana and also Tora were called too.

Everyone here thought it was going to be about yesterday's incident but, Tora wasn't at the place yesterday.

It was lunch time and while we were talking about what the business was going to be, we reached the office and united with Tachibana who came back from the infirmary.

"I see, she's awake……."

"Umu. There isn't an after-effect too"

I asked if there were any wounds on her from the check up but, I became relieved anyway.

Even though I know it's going to be alright since I attacked her with a <<Blaze>> similar to a blunt-type but, it was still fact that I launched <<Thunder Mjolnir god's strike>> at Miyabi.

"But, she will be there for a few days just in case after considering the influences she might get from her surroundings"

Now that one night has passed, many students now know that Miyabi worn the <<Unit>>.

There were some students that got injured during that incident so it was a necessary procedure.

"Even Miyabi wanted to arrange her feelings without anyone around….."

I could only nod, when Tachibana was making a complex expression.

"Also, this is my request but-------please don't visit her for a while……especially you, Kokonoe. Well you know"

"…….I understand"

Although it was inevitable, I wanted to apologize to Miyabi.

I wanted to see her cheerful face.

---but, the reason why I was the biggest factor of this incident was clearly because Miyabi said my name many times when she was being controlled.

I know painfully well that I shouldn't show up now-----so, it's better not to meet her face to face.

The thing waiting for us in the office was the talk personally by the chairman about the training.

"You all will be joining the actual training on the day after tomorrow"

It seems students that turned <<Level 3 III>> will join the Dawn organization's public maintenance order team----Ethnarch's mission. It was the organization's consideration, so that we could have a smoother entrance into the team after graduation, by joining many actual training in an early stage.

I heard this from my last class but, the day has finally come.

"From the start of the year to summer, this is the first time that 5 students gained the qualifications to join this year. There are many excellent students this year and the organization's higher-ups are happy. Also, graduates of this school-----everyone affiliated with the Ethnarch is anticipating your attendance in the training"

However, the introduction was taken over by Mikuni-sensei.

"People that would cause hindrance to others during the mission because of their wounded state----which means,

Tachibana-san will not be joining in. However, by your wish, we will consider allowing you in if you choose to observe instead…….”

“……..I am very sorry but, I will leave this one out. Right now Miyabi-----no, I'm thinking of being beside Hotaka-san”

In terms of gaining experience, joining in even if it’s just observing would be a good idea but, Tachibana honestly picked to be beside Miyabi.

The chairman clapped her hands to Tachibana, who chose to leave this one out for personally reasons.

“The feelings of taking care of your partner <<Duo>>, it’s wonderful. Within the students in the same year, you are a skilled, smart, and excellent student so, I wanted you to experience the field as fast as possible but, it can’t be helped if you have that reason”

“Thank you, Chairman."

After making one nod to Tachibana, who bowed down, the chairman looked back at us again.

“Okay, I will now tell you regarding the mission’s contents. I think this has quite related to you all”

(Us……?)

I waited while wondering what she meant-----

"The training content involves being my guard when I am attending a banquet. In that place-----an old man called << Equipment Smith>>, the person that made << God's Destruction Libel Team>> will be attending too"

"-----!! E-<<Equipment Smith>>….!?"

I shouted in surprise when the chairman told me the unexpected name.

"Judging by that reaction, it seems you know about him to a certain extent"

"Fufu, Tooru is unexpectedly quite informed I see"

Lilith shrugs her shoulders to play it off when the chairman looked at her.

Of course, there was no way that would fool her but, the chairman did not ask anything and looked back at me.

"From the organizer of this banquet, we were strictly prohibited from any battles no matter what the reason may be. However, it's probably hard to think that nothing is going happen with the << Equipment Smith>>, after we looked at the past situations. Because of that, this mission has without a doubt danger awaiting it. For that----"

The chairman told us that there will be a fork path here.

"I don't mind if anyone says that they want to pass on this one you know? All of you are still students after all"

But-----not a single person wanted to leave it out.

"Kokonoe Tooru. I have something I want to tell you so stay here"

After telling us the gathering time and place for the day after tomorrow, I was the only one called to stay back when we were about to leave.

I made everyone else head to the cafeteria first and the office only had me, the chairman and Mikuni-sensei left inside.

"Err……..what is it about?"

"I am thinking of repaying back the debt I owe you"

"Debt?"

"Yes, did you forget what I said when you saved me from <<K>>?"

"Now that I think about it……."

I have memories of her telling me that on the boat.

"I didn't finish my sentence the last time but, I did not fight to make a debt from……."

"……..I know-----is what I wanted to say but, I won't be satisfied if I don't do so. Also, I think this isn't a bad deal for you"

After the chairman giggled, a thud was produced when she placed a black cylinder on top of the table.

"And that's…….?"

"This is in a special shape but----this is a Jet Injector"

"-----!!"

I understood immediately what the chairman was trying to say.

The chairman noticed that I understood before nodding.

"Kokonoe Tooru, I hereby give you the permission to perform the <<Sublimation Ceremony>>……This is my thanks"

My heart's beating loudly.

There was no way that I wouldn't understand on how big of a deal it was.

Originally, <<Level Up>> chances are given only 3 times per year.

This was already common knowledge but, it's not like I will successfully sublimate.

On top of that, I was told that full-body muscle pain and high fever will attack the person for a few days if the sublimation failed.

It seems Miyabi and Tatsu had a rough time waking up for a few days after failing the sublimation, and continued sleeping in their room without coming out.

However, to me who wants to gain <<Power>>, the risk doesn't matter to me and the chance to increase the sublimation is like a wish come true but------

There was something I couldn't agree from this talk.

"I have one question. The reason why I stayed back here is because……"

"Yes, this is something I wanted to tell only to you"

"……why am I the only one? There were several people that moved to save the chairman. Julie, Lilith, and Imari too. Tora too even though he wasn't at the spot……..but even so, what kind of reason do you have to give me special treatment-----"

"…….It's because you are an <<Unrivaled>>, Kokonoe Tooru "

The reply was somewhat within my expectation.

The reason why Lilith, who's an <<Unrivaled Blaze>> like me, didn't get chosen was probably because she has no limit to the chances to sublimate, unlike the other students.

And, am I given special treatment too because I am an << Irregular>>?

But, I didn't want to be treated that way and naturally said my thoughts.

"I…….for me to be treated specially and leaving everyone else behind……"

"Why are you hesitating? The reason why you wanted the << Lucifer>>, wasn't to happily hold hands with others and reach the goal right……?"

"------!!"

My shock and lack of composure were exposed when she stab me with those very accurate words.

It's just as she said.

I wanted <<Power>> for my revenge, but-----

(Don't tell me the chairman knew…..!?)

The only person that knows about the incident with him was Julie, that person and none other than myself.

"I will now repeat myself, Kokonoe Tooru. I give you the permission to perform the <<Sublimation Ceremony>>. Considering the possibility of failure after using this permitted sublimation, I don't mind if it performed after the training----"

"Wait"

I interrupted her words and swung my head.

"I will…….not use this authority. I don't need it"

"……can I hear the reason?"

Quietly and in a low tone, she asked me without any hint of emotion inside her voice.

"It's true that I want to become stronger------I want a <<Power> > that won't lose to anyone. That's why, I am really thankful that you gave me the chance for that. But, receiving the chance to sublimate alone and leaving my comrades, who fought together with me------just feels wrong"

At this moment the memories of my comrades, who suffered together with me to aim for the top, floated in my mind.

The memories of my precious comrades that would help me out .

We had many different conditions and situations but, if I alone gained power for my own purposes then, I feel that I might get distorted like him.

"I-----am competing with everyone to reach the top so, I will not use this authority"

I looked straight at the chairman and told her my determination .

The black clothed girl looked a little shocked before narrowing her eyes.

"*Giggle*. I am happy to the bottom of my heart that a proud and noble student has enrolled into the academy…….I understand, I will respect your determination. Let's end the conversation here"

After she said that, I bowed down the chairman who was facing her back to me and I was about to leave the room but, at that moment,

"…….but remember this"

The chairman standing at the window turned around and told me this.

"No matter how wonderful your determination may be, the world will not guarantee you its acceptance……that is even more so, if the world is filled with Malice"

Ill intents will bear their fangs towards you no matter what determination one has.

I found that out with my body; with a feeling that cannot be compared with pain from 2 years ago, and also yesterday.

That was why the chairman's words pierced deeply into me.

It was as if it was choking me……

After 2 days, it was on Saturday evening-----

We gathered at the quay at the edge of the southern back gate and the chairman and Mikuni-sensei were waiting for us there.

We were going to depart on the pressure boat and after we were dropped off somewhere in the city, we will meet up with the Ethnarch and switch to a car.

"Be careful, Kokonoe. Please refrain from forcing yourself"

"Haha, I know"

Even though I replied that, Tachibana looked towards Julie.

"…….Julie, I am counting on you to guard Kokonoe"

"Ja----"

"What guard…….just what do you think about me"

"That's because you have been reckless when you aren't in my eyes reach. I feel worried when I just think about you getting reckless in today's mission too"

"……..Tomoe's head is filled with Tooru huh"

"------!? N-no-not really; it's just for a friend. Wh-what, Kokonoe , why are you looking at me with those eyes!?"

I have been giving her reckless impressions of myself huh…… ……was the look I have been giving her but, Tachibana suddenly looked panicked and-------

"D-don't make any weird misunderstandings, Kokonoe you idiot-------!!"

"Why------!?"

Even though she was still in crutches, she ran away with tremendous speed.

Tachibana passed by Mikuni-sensei and Tsukimi accompanied by the chairman.

We were going to depart--------was what I thought but, Tora got called over by Mikuni-sensei and they started talking.

Thanks to that, we had free time and the rabbit-ear person approached me with a mischievous smile.

"Kuhah, the usual playboy I see"

"What are you talking about?"

"I am obviously talking about miss-goody. Her face was super red. What did you do this time? What words did you attack her

with? Did you suddenly put your tongue in? Did you fondle her huge tits?"

"Like hell!! And also, that isn't playboy anymore, its pervert!!"

"Kuhah, you can say that too♪"

"You only can call it that!!"

I got tired from retorting to Tsukimi and *Zeehaa* started breathing heavily.

"I-in the first place, what did you come here for? We aren't going together in this mission right"

"Well yeah. Give me a break, why do I have to baby-sit oh come on……"

Tsukimi placed her hands on my shoulders in an overly-friendly manner and it seems that she was made to house-watch to avoid causing any troubles there.

"I am completely free since nothing happens during baby-sitting. Rabbits die from boredom you know?"

"It's obviously better if nothing happens. However, if something really does happens then-------it's reassuring that you are left here"

I won't doubt her ability since she easily took down over 20 enemies alone during the attack in the seaside school.

By any chance, the <<God's Destruction Team>> commences a two-point attack like last time, Tsukimi staying back here will really be helpful……leaving out her personality though.[Libel]

"Hohoo, the <<Irregular>> feels reassured about me huh? Finally fell in love?"

"No way"

"I will pull your pants down in the next training and destroy your place in society"

(……her existence itself is giving me anxiety about the future)

Tora's conversation ended when we were having that conversation, and I was called to inform me it was time for departure.

"Okay I got to go. I'll leave things here for the house-watch period"

"Okay okay, leave it to me. Don't say for only the house-watch and say from now on"

"…….you're a nice person huh"

It's not something I should be saying to someone who tried to kill me but, it can't be helped since I really felt that way.

"Stu—pid, what nice person are you talking about. I am an unequaled good woman"

After saying that, Tsukimi gave me a thumbs-down but, she was showing a smile.

At that time, Julie and the others called out to me when they were already in the boat.

"Tooru, we are going"

"Opps, I'm coming"

Right after I entered the boat, the boat engine started producing sound and we slowly started moving.

At that moment-----

"Tooru-kun…….!!"

Miyabi was calling out my name while running towards the quay.

"Mi-Miyabi!! Why are you here…….!?"

"I-I heard that you joined a dangerous mission from Tomoe-chan……..! So……ple-please be careful! Please come back safely with everyone!! I have something I want to tell you!! So please come back okay, Tooru-kun!!"

Miyabi shouted to me who was on the boat getting further away.

That's why I shouted back.

"I get it, I will come back!! I promise to come back with everyone!!"

Miyabi swung her hand and I show her my clenched fist.

Our voices could no longer reach other and Miyabi turned smaller and further away.

"…….Tooru"

When I looked behind, Julie, Lilith and Tora were looking at me .

"Let's protect our promise"

"Aah, of course. Let's come back, everyone!"

The 3 of them made a strong nod at my words.

Part 2

After 20 minutes, Tooru and the gang were no longer on the sea and were ascending a river.

The boat reached the dock for aquatic buses located at the riverside, which was among one of the several spots including the dummy place scheduled for us to dock as a pre-caution for surprise attacks.

We met up with the Ethnarch, and switch to a car.

While taking caution for an attack from <<
God's Destruction (Libel) Team>>, the car shook around for 30 minutes and the curtains for night time fell-------nothing particular happened and the moment Tooru was told that he could see their destination, he made a relieved sigh.

However, Tooru opened his eyes wide immediately when he saw their destination.

The area was surrounded with tall fences and after we passed through the door guard, the area was so wide that it was unbelievable that the premise was inside a metropolitan area, and there was a western garden filled with properly organized flowers and shrubs.

After a while of loitering into the garden, we reached the dazzling mansion that looked like a palace.

The car stopped right in the hall at the front of the mansion and after Sakuya got off---------

"All of you stand-by outside. Please listen to the captain's orders"

After leaving that line, she accompanied Mikuni and entered the ground with the guide who came to pick her up.

Lilith looked at the black clothed girl walk into the door.

Even though she's the <<Exception>>, she was powerless in this place controlled by the Dawn organization and could only see her off.

After the two of them disappeared into (pass) the door which was twice as tall, the gold girl looked up at the building.

It looked like a carefree action at first glance but, it wasn't peaceful inside her.

(What is this presence…….just what kind of monsters are the <<Rein>>?)

The girl, who has the double the keenness of a person, felt goosebumps at the powerful presence lingering around the mansion.

"What's wrong Lilith?"

"……having the ceremony here with Tooru doesn't sound like a bad idea at all"

In order to prevent having me feel her discomposure, the gold girl immediately put on her mask and joked around.

There was a wide atrium hall after passing through the door and there was a huge staircase leading to the 2nd floor inside.

Sakuya and Mikuni followed the guide up the stairs, and eventually stopped in front of a big door.

"Over here please"

(The <<Rein Conference>>-----is finally about to start……)

Even Sakuya felt nervous in front of the big door.

The heavy overpowering presence could be felt by the black clothed girl, who's indifferent from fighting.

After the guide pushed open the heavy door, Sakuya and Mikuni entered the luxurious room.

A dazzling chandelier was on the roof (ceiling) illuminating the room, a mat with a beautiful pattern was spread out on the floor and a luxurious round table was placed in the middle.

There were 7 chairs placed around the table and 4 of them were filled.

Which means leaving aside Sakuya, who has just arrived, 2 people have not come yet.

"You're here, the <<Blaze>> Ojou-chan"

After the door behind Sakuya and Mikuni closed, a rude man putting his legs on the table talked to her.

The 40 year old man's cheeks were a little red and it could be guessed that it was from drinking alcohol. When he stood up, his body crossed over 190cm and a normal person would be frightened if they confront him. However the man smiled and his teeth could be seen, making him feel friendly.

Sakuya pinched her gothic dress and lowered her head.

"It has been a while, <<Grave Phantom>>-sama. And also, it's nice meeting all the other <<Rein>> members. I am the one that inherited the <<Blaze>>----<<Diabolica>>. Nice to be (meet) your acquaintance"

"Ouu, nice to meet you….ah, Jou-chan your seat is there so go ahead. The Onii-chan you brought has none so sorry"

"I will take you up on your words"

"No, I don't mind"

After the man called <<Phantom>> pointed to the chair, Sakuya walked over and-----

"……by the way Jou-chan, how is he?"

"I brought that for him here. You can go check if you're curious you know?"

"Hnnn, it's not to that extent but I'll pass"

While hearing the big man's reply, Sakuya sat down and Mikuni stood behind his master.

After looking at those 2, <<Phantom>> looked at the whole scene before talking.

"Okay then. Before we start, let's introduce ourselves for the new face <<Diabolica>> here. First off, I am <<Grave Phantom>>. Nice to meet ya, Ojou-chan……alright, next you, <<Disaster>>"

<<Phantom>> looked towards the young man sitting at his left side.

"……<<Dark Ray Disaster>>"

Not caring that it was in the summer, after the man slightly lifted his face which was half covered with a muffler, he took a glance at Sakuya before telling her his <<Sepher Name>>. He then lowered his sights to show that he had nothing more to say.

But, hearing his <<Sepher name>> was more than enough for Sakuya.

Even though it wasn't much, <<Rien>> written inside Dawn organization's secret data's.

(A <<Holy knight>> affiliated with <<Holy>>)

A <<Holy knight>> is a title given to someone who is affiliated with the Anti-heretic organization <<Holy>>, which is a bureau that won't see sunlight even within historical giant sects based in Western Europe. Above judging heretics in the name of god as a <<Holy Knight>>, he is rumored to have high battle abilities.

Also, since the Dawn organization's biological enhancement nano-machines-<<Lucifer>> was a research that strays from the path of god, they weren't on good terms with <<Holy>>. Sakuya felt that the reason for <<Disaster>>'s unsociability was probably related to that.

"Okay next goes to you, <<Diva>>"

<<Phantom>> moved his sights to the beauty with a tidy air around her, who was sitting beside Sakuya.

"It's <<Silent Diva>>. We are both females so let's be friends, <<Blaze Diabolica>>"

Her beauty was enough to steal anyone's eyes and her silent smile was just like her <<Sepher Name>>.

There was no mistake that anyone would fall for her if they saw that warm and gentle smile.

(If it's only by atmosphere, she the most out of character here)

Leaving aside her age, Sakuya who was the most out of character person here, thought that while giving back a smile.

"Of course. I have heard a lot of (about) you, <<Silent Diva>>-sama"

There were only a few number of people in the surface world that knows about <<Rein>> but, <<Silent Diva>> was the most famous within them all.

That's because she's a princess of a certain country in Eastern Europe.

The person who devoted herself to advance the medical healthcare system of her motherland, and simultaneously, the gentle and beautiful heir to the throne who looks like a holy lady-----

However, as long as she's someone whose name is listed in the <<Rein>>, Sakuya bears in mind that she was not someone to take light of.

"Okay, next would----"

"Be me"

Even though the lean old man sitting on the right side of <<Phantom>>----<<Equipment Smith>> continued his sentence, the big man reeking in alcohol swung his head.

"Nope, not your turn yet old man"

The moment <<Phantom>> looked over to the empty seat between <<Smith>> and <<Diva>>----

Suddenly, a round glowing ball of light appeared above an empty seat.

The mysterious light that was inside the pattern (ball), flicked over to the vacant seat-----

Immediately, a young man in a showy military uniform filled the seat that was supposed to be empty.

"Salut (Long time no see), ladies and gentlemen. And also------
Enchante (first time meeting you), <<Blaze Diabolica>>"

"……. <<Tempest Judge>>-sama, I presume?"

"Exactly"

The same time the young man made a satisfied nod to Sakuya's confirmation-----

A shadow suddenly appeared on the table.

"You bastard----------!!"

<<Disaster>> raised his giant scythe and jumped towards the young man in military uniform.

The grim reaper's scythe that would definitely reap the life of others in one swing, made a flash -----

But the blade stopped right just before the <<Tempest Judge>>' s neck.

---no, it was stopped.

“I already said that, battles are prohibited here, <<Disaster>>”

Holding the blade between 2 fingers, the <<Phantom>> was the one that prevented him from swinging the grim reaper’s scythe.

He was sitting down just a moment ago.

“What are you going to do? If you really want to go at it then, I’ ll take you on alright?”

“*Tsk*……!”

<<Disaster>> clicked his tongue before landing on his chair by kicking the table again.

“Well, it’s a great help to the host if you choose to be like that”

“…….it’s annoying if he runs away while we are fighting”

While glaring at <<Judge>>, <<Disaster>> made an irritated voice before sitting down.

“Was that a teleporter?”

Not caring at the problem that just occurred, Sakuya asked the young man in military uniform and he nodded.

Magic-----

Even though it's something treated as fiction in the current world, it exists, just like what was seen here. However, its existence is hidden and it's not taken as fact in the surface world but, that goes for the <<Lucifer>> and <<Unit>> too.

"Is it your first time seeing teleportation magic?"

"Yes, it's magic itself though. It's embarrassing for me to say this but I am quite distant from that field and I didn't have the time for it too so, I only have a little knowledge about it"

"Fufu, mine is just all knowledge and the magic itself doesn't happen. The teleport I performed just now was thanks to a tool with magic engraved in it"

Sakuya felt that it was a statement not worth believing.

(<<Tempest Judge>>-sama-------he has the least information among the <<Rein>> and has a lot of mysteries around him. At the very least, he looks quite informed about magic I see……..also, he is quite in bad terms with <<Dark Ray Disaster>>-sama)

It was great info that was what stayed in the girl's heart.

That's because, she won't know when she can use their relationship for her purposes.

"Next off is my-----"

"I know enough so it's okay, <<Equipment Smith>>-sama"

"Wahaha. That's cold, Jou-chan"

The lean old man shrugged his shoulders at Sakuya's bland reply and that caused <<Phantom>> to laugh out.

After his laugh settled down, the big man pointed his fat fingers at the vacant seat.

"For the last person-----he will probably show himself if you get closer to the <<Absolute Duo>>"

"…….which means, a meeting won't be possible unless I get close huh"

"Exactly. The conversation is moving fast and it's a great help"

After <<Phantom>> said that, he made a grin.

"Okay then. Now that things have quiet down and everyone is here. Oiii, wait for me! Someone's dirty leg caused a stain so change the cloth!"

The big man played innocent since it was caused by him putting his legs on the table and made a loud laugh while pointing that out.

After a while, extravagant food was prepared and they passed the time talking together with the food.

The conversation was mainly the taste and ingredients of the food but, contents that would pry into other member's situation would sometimes be mixed in---which could be said to be a normal thing to do as a <<Rein>>.

Why would they do such a thing?

That's because the other <<Rein>> weren't comrades.

Even though the <<Absolute Duo>> was their core, they walk on separate paths-------basically, they're all competing against each other.

That's why they would hide their own information and use speech skills to gain their opponent's information.

Sakuya was also imitating that but-----

"Is the <<***Blaze***>> doing well, <<Diabolica>>-dono?"

Edward talked to her when she was in a conversation.

"You can't figure that out from the point that I came here?"

"Oh my, please accept my apologies. I haven't drank alcohol with him before after all"

It's a weird question to ask about the <<Blaze>> to the <<Blaze Diabolica>>.

That's because Sakuya wasn't originally the <<Blaze>>.

The original <<Blaze>> was referring to Sakuya's grandfather called <<Blaze Innovator>>.

However, ever since he was bedridden from a sickness from 3 years ago, the black clothed girl inherited his <<Lucifer>> research and the <<Sepher Name>> of the<<Blaze>>.

Naturally, Edward asked knowing full well about that.

"Can you please not go so far to ask me about that here?"

"Fuhahaha, that was just a greeting. The main topic starts here"

"Oh is that so. Well then, can I hear the fun talk you have for me ?"

"Of course"

After making a deep nod, <<Smith>> started conversing with her while the other <<Rien>> was showing interest at them.

"Fufu, looks like a fun conversation is about to start. I would like to hear the rest quick"

"Haha, we are expecting a fun talk here, old-man"

"Sadly, it might be more of a ghost story then a fun talk for you all"

The old man replied back with a smile that makes one feel his inner mischief, to both <<Judge>> and <<Phantom>>.

After making a smile, the military uniformed young man and old man listened carefully to him.

"Okay, back to our main topic. Though I said that, I think the wise <<Diabolica>>-dono already knows what I am going to talk about"

"……..It's the alliance huh"

Edward nodded at Sakuya's reply and the <<Tempest Judge>> raised a voice of admiration.

"Tres bien[Wonderful]. I never would have imagined that a member of <<Rein>> would suggest to team up"

"Now that's interesting. It's true that the old man's <<Unit>> and the jou-chan's <<Exceed>> has great compatibility"

"I heard this rumor before. That the <<Unit>> you talked about has finally seen completion"

"Fuhahaha, you get info fast like I thought"

Even if he asked where did you get that information from? , << Smith>> did not investigate and just smiled because he knows that <<Judge>> would just play it off.

"The exo-skeleton's suit completion huh…….fumu, it will be a miraculous <<Power>> if the alliance is created but, what is the <<Blaze Diabolica>>'s answer?"

"……..before my answer, I will have to ask you a question. The <<Lucifer>> will only function to people who are born with the <<Adapt>>. Because of that, I might get benefits by the alliance but, there is no benefits what so ever to you, <<Equipment Smith>>-sama"

After the black-clothed girl said those words in a strange tone, the lean old man replied back immediately as if he was waiting for those words.

"Of course, I do know about the <<Adapt>> too. I was part of Dawn before after all-----I was also your grandfather's friend and we would often talk about our research as good competing opponents"

"Then, tying an alliance without any benefits would be----"

"I also know this"

The old man interrupted her words and continued.

"I also know that the research of the new-model <<Lucifer>> has the possibility of sublimating a person to an <<Exceed>>

without the <<Adapt>>------also, I know that the new-model is in testing phase too"

"…….even though you were away for quite a while, it looks like you are quite familiar about our internal affairs huh"

The smile disappeared from Sakuya's expression.

The plan for the new-model <<Lucifer>> was established during the several years the old man was missing.

This means that, there was no way for Edward to know about the new-model and he currently holds more secrets than just the <<Lucifer>>.

(…….I should think that there is a traitor among us. Judging by the number of people that knows about confidential information, there are only a few but……..)

Her reasoning was correct. The reason why the previous attacks could easily succeed was because one of the researchers was secretly working for Edward.

(I have to do something about it once I get back)

With or without the knowledge about what was moving in Sakuya's mind, the <<Equipment Smith>> started talking about the alliance with passion.

"The <<Power>> of a <<Exceed>> wearing the <<Unit>> is just as what you saw a few days ago. Even though it was a student who was trained together with the impurities known as a normal

lifestyle, she displayed that much progress. We should train all of them as pure soldiers and later on administer them the new-model <<Lucifer>> to the students that are completed as battle machines—as the << God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel >>; just imagine the possibilities if we do so!"

<<Smith>> stood up from his chair and his voice gradually feels more heated.

"Once they gained the new <<Power>> which will be completed in no time, they will reach a higher height. The completion of the real <<Libel>> will occur at that moment and they would surpass, destroy anyone standing in their path-------- yes, even if the one standing in the way was god!! Wahahahaha!!"

Everyone gave their comments at the old man's announcement while he was making a loud laugh.

"That's bold, old man. So that's the path you are on"

"Tres bien Wonderful. Surpass and destroy god-----so that's why you named them << God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel >>"

"Everything huh, that's quite grand I see"

"……..To think that you would mention killing God in front of someone affiliated to <<Holy>>"

And the crucial Sakuya remained silently looking at <<Smith>> without moving her expression.

"……I have one question. Why is it a group aiming for the top instead of one person?"

She asked a question to the old man.

"Fuhahaha. How obvious. Someone alone can't handle a group. Unraveling history demonstrates that too. No matter how heroic a hero is, he was never alone and there was always a subordinate or assistance behind him"

What the old man said was correct.

By grouping up, humans contributed knowledge, pass down skills and soon, conquered the lands.

"Oh <<Diabolica>>, the person who lived to inherit the <<Blaze >>. Since you are the <<Blaze>> that created the <<Duo>> system and Ethnarch team, you should be able to understand on why a group is important right?"

"……..yes, I know enough. Thank you for answering my question, <<Equipment Smith>>-sama"

"I don't mind. More importantly, after considering the conversation we had just now, can I have the reply for the alliance once more?"

The black clothed girl told her reply to the old man, who was seeking for a reply.

"I refuse"

"Wha……!?"

The girl continued to the surprised old man.

"You said this before <<Equipment Smith>>-sama. That, we are quite similar……it is just as you say. <<Lucifer>> and the << Unit>> enhances humans with external factors-------that one point is the same…..however, that is all to it"

"Houu…….?"

"The <<Power>> you seek is only on the surface. It's clear from the complete soldier as a machine example you said just now…… …….however, we are also seeking the <<Power>> of the <<Soul> >. Even if, the fields we are aiming at are different, and that's what I think"

At this moment, the small <<Diabolica>> made a smile which was enough to give anyone looking at her the chills.

"Also-------I realized this"

"Realize? What are you talking about?"

"Your real ***intentions***"

Edward slightly moved his eyebrows when he heard Sakuya's words.

"<<Equipment Smith>>-sama. I know that you lost to my grandfather, the <<Blaze Innovator>> 12 years ago. You then found out about the <<Absolute Duo>> and instead of the path

my grandfather reached, you chose the road of destruction-----as a result, you separated yourself from Bristol-sama and the others, from the 3 head of the organization Varan„

“--------!! I-I didn’t lose!! Take those words back, you brat!!”

Sakuya placed her finger on her mouth to Edward who was trembling.

“You wanted to gain satisfaction by using my chosen grandfather’s <<Power>> to grant the wish of the un-chosen you; that’s one shallow motive huh. *Giggle**Giggle**Giggle*…….”

“D-damn you……..! You little brat, acting like you know everything…….!!”

Even though the old man slammed the table and vented out his anger, that loss of composure was just the same as telling her that her words were true.

“You damn doll for Tsukumo!! I will make you regret insulting me!!”

“Oi oi, old man. I told you that fighting in this banquet is prohibited”

<<Phantom>> shrug his shoulders and told that to the old man, who turned angry from a bulls-eye but, Sakuya made a small laugh.

"*giggle*, just what are you going to do to make me regret? From what I see, it seems you are alone today so I don't think you can do anything"

"Just like you, I avoided doing something boorish like bringing anyone other than <<Rein>> members into the <<Rein Conference >>. If you wish for it then, I can have the <<
God's Destruction (Libel) Team>> standing-by break into this place you know"

Sakuya chuckled when she saw the old man turned explosive.

The biggest reason why she joined tonight's banquet was because she was expecting something to happen------and if that doesn't happen then, she would have to cause something to make it happen.

But at this moment------

"Wait up, both of you. I think it's a good idea to cool your heads okay?"

<<Judge>> cut in to mediate them.

---was what everyone thought at first.

"However……!!"

<<Judge>>'s voice turned even louder and caused an echo in the room.

"Even if we come to an agreement, I feel that it will clearly leave a negative mark between you two. Because of that, how about we settle this with a game?"

"A game!! I don't have to listen to such a stupid suggestion!!"

"Non (No no) non. I am always serious, <<Equipment Smith>>"

The impression given by him shrugging his shoulder and head swinging from the left to right was completely different from his words and that made Edward grind his teeth.

At that point, the other person in concern--Sakuya joined in too.

"…….I'm interested. It's an idea from <<Tempest Judge>> after all, it's not a simple game right?"

"Oi oi, <<Judge>>. What nonsense are you saying"

"Why not, <<Phantom>>? Rather than causing a bigger fuss in this place, I think it's quite a peaceful way to settle things"

"Well, that's true too but……."

<<Phantom>> made a difficult face now that <<Silent Diva>>, who was quietly looking at the situation, agreed.

"Of course, if both <<Blaze Diabolica>>-sama and << Equipment Smith>>-sama agrees then, I feel that it's a good plan"

"Haaa, I get it. Go on, <<Judge>>"

"Since both sides brought many game pieces, how about we have them compete? Of course, there are going to be rules since it's a game.

"That is an interesting idea. How about it, <<Equipment Smith>>-sama?"

"……..Understood. I'll make you understand, just who is better at making an excellent group"

Both sides were smiling----

At this moment, a game which can also be called a representative war was established.

After a little while, <<Phantom>> looked at the monitor that was going to display the outside situation, get brought into the room while sighing before mumbling to himself.

"<<Killing game>> huh……seriously, that's one bloody name……well, let's see how much you grown huh"

Chapter 6 『Sever The Fang

Part 1

Has 1 hour passed since the chairman entered the mansion?

Since the full-time guards were standing guard in the premises, we received orders to be alert without disturbing them.

"How should I say this…….We feel out of place here"

While looking around the surroundings; the reason why I brought that topic to Tora, was not because of the gorgeous scenery.

After seeing the people visible in the premises, I compared them to myself.

Including the many guards standing guard, there were female and male Ethnarch members wearing personal security clothes. On top of that, a bodyguard probably brought by a guest invited to the banquet-----(what's more a foreigner with a scary face), was wearing black clothes like it was normal.

Compared to them, we were clearly feeling out of place since we were in our usual Kouryou uniforms.

"We feel like students on a field trip, here to observe society……"

"Fuun, I don't care. Looks and skills aren't related anyway"

"I think so too but-----wait, Julie…….?"

After looking around one more time, I saw a silver hair girl surrounded by several people in black clothes at the fountain in front of the mansion.

"I'll go take a look!"

"Ah Tooru!.....seriously, you're over protective"

Tora's tired voice could be heard behind me when I ran towards Julie.

Worrying about an <<Exceed>> who has abilities beyond normal humans----

(It's true that I' am overprotective…….)

Nevertheless, inside her was a normal---- (She's a little blank but)-----girl so, it was only normal for me to worry.

"Tooru"

It seems Julie noticed me getting close and after receiving something from a man in black clothes, she took a bow before running over to me.

"Are you okay, Julie. Did they make you do something weird?"

"Nai. They were surprised that I was an Ethnarch-trainee……
…they thought I was a child that got lost here"

I was about to laugh out loud at the latter half of her sentence, but I managed to suppress the urge.

"Ah, now that I think about it, you received something from them?"

"Ja--. They gave me candy, encouraging me to work hard for this training."

I was close to bursting out this time when I heard how she was treated like a child.

"……..By the way Tooru. What were you talking about with that person?"

Julie directed her sights at Lilith, who was standing still while looking up at the mansion again.

"Hnn…….It's not like anything happened. But, I felt that she was acting weird when we reached here. I tried talking to her just in case, but she just played it off"

"…….I'm amazed you noticed that she's acting weird."

"That's because she's been worried about me recently."

A few days ago, Lilith planned a birthday party for me because she got worried about me being depressed.

Because of that, it's my turn to cheer her up if anything happens to her, or at the very least, to ask what she was concerned about.

That's the reason why he noticed Lilith was acting weird, but he felt a little lonely since it ended up with her just trying to play it off .

Pull.

Just when I felt something pulling my body, it was apparently Julie pulling my sleeves.

Adding on; at a level where only people close to her would notice,------(Of course, I could notice)------her expression was clouded.

"What's wrong, Julie?"

"……I wonder what's wrong?"

Chirin the bell rang as she tilted her head.

It seems that Julie unconsciously moved her body and doesn't know the reason why she pulled my body.

After shrugging my shoulders telling her that nothing is wrong, I went back to the front of the mansion with Julie.

The Ethnarch captain called us to gather when we were standing guard.

The reason became clear when the captain started talking to everyone.

"There's going to be an attack!?"

"Yeah. An emergency call came from Mikuni-san. He told us that there will be an attack from those <<God's Destruction Team (Libel)>> people in exactly 20 minutes so get everyone into position to protect the mansion from the attack"

"Captain. It's the same with this attack, but how do they know the exact time?"

The captain made a troubled face at that question.

"Sorry but I don't know. But, it seems that the enemy's commander will definitely aim to break through the mansion's front gate"

After saying that, the door that the Chairman passed through was pointed at.

"There is a hall behind that door and there are stairs leading towards the 2nd floor inside. If the enemy commander reaches the big door after climbing the stairs-----***we will be the loser***. And, if we defeat the commander or prevent the enemy from reaching there in 30 minutes, ***it will be our win***"

"……..Losing and wining conditions; what's more there were several of them----it's like a game"

I felt the same way at Lilith's mumble.

(What intentions do they have? Did something happen between the Chairman and the <<Equipment Smith>>?)

However, there's no way we could know the situation inside the mansion, no matter how much we think about it.

During that time, the Captain ordered us to separate into a 4 in 1 group.

We were teamed up with the usual members and were told to stand guard at the back lines because we were trainees.

"We will now begin our mission! Our enemies are people that caused big damage to Kouryou Academy a few days ago during their attack. All members, and trainees, there might be weird conditions in this but, please get to position with the determination suitable for the actions that we are about to have right now. This is—war!!"

Everyone there felt nervous at that strict announcement.

We went to our stand-by point------

While we were standing at one corner of the terrace spread out to the left and right from the mansion's front entrance; I thought this while looking at each team scattering to several spots in the premises.

(…….What would happen if we lose)

We were not told that by the captain.

Judging by how <<K>> tried to snatch the chairman away during the last fight; the possibility for the same thing to happen again is enough.

(We can't lose this…….)

However, even though we are having this satiation, the only <<High Level>> within our group-Mikuni-sensei was still in the mansion. It seems that he can't move recklessly, meaning that the only the Ethnarch and us- the Kouryou students will be the only ones that can counter the <<God's Destruction[Libel] Team>>.

There were a total of 29 Ethnarch who are <<[Level 3] IV >> like us and the battle potential we have now will overpower a normal opponent. However, all the members of the <<God's Destruction[Libel] Team>> will be wearing <<Unit>> so in terms of physical abilities, we are probably equal in strength.

The difference in strength will probably be our equipment.

Since the <<God's Destruction[Libel] Team>> will be equipped with Assault Rifles, we are extremely at the disadvantage at long-range combat.

The Ethnarch's also had guns but, since they are practice mainly for stopping the target and has low killing firepower, the possibility that it would be blocked by the <<Unit>>'s defense was high.

For our side, our thinkable option was probably to reach a distance close enough for us to swing our <<Blaze>>.

(Hn?)

Standing beside me; Julie beside me suddenly lowered her head .

When I moved my sights to that direction after wondering why she lowered her head; I saw a black clothes man getting into a car.

For this attack; the guardsmen's were ordered to stand by inside the mansion while the black clothed group was ordered to stand by outside the war zone.

"What's wrong Julie?"

"It's the person that gave me the candy"

"Aah, it's that person.

His face looks stern but, he might be a very kind person.

"It seems that he has a child that's around my age"

That was probably referred to her height.

"He told me that, I must take care of my life even though I picked a dangerous job"

"Yeah, we have to do that"

There was also the promise to Miyabi that we will all go back safely.

That's why I will definitely,

The disaster occurred right after I made my vow again in my heart.

Dozuuuunnnnn!! A loud explosion echoed and shook the atmosphere.

That was the signal-----of the beginning of the fight.

"Wha……..!?"

Flickering flames rose in the dark night.

The origin of that flame and smoke----was from the car that the black clothed group rode in.

Afterwards; the cars heading outside the premises started to explode and the flames scorched the night sky.

"No-way……"

I mumbled blankly.

They were killed.

Even though they were just alive a minute ago. "This is war"

The captain's words re-appeared in my mind.

But even so, I can't believe the scene in front of me.

I couldn't believe that they lost their lives from a fight completely unrelated to them.

The silver haired girl standing beside me felt the same way too.

She only stared with her words lost just like me.

But, we regained ourselves when he saw him.

Even though he was at a distance where we can't visibly recognize him; we definitely knew it.

Standing straight at the gate lighted in fire; a man in battle suit.

Within the echoing gunshots and explosions, his hair was swaying from the heat wave----

Like leading an army of enemies, the young man was leisurely walking-----

He was sneering at us with his sharp-eyes directed at us.

"<<K>>------!!"

She moved the same time I shouted.

The silver girl standing beside me pounced out with the <<Twin Double blades>> in her hands but----

"Don't move!!"

The gold girl used the <<Gun Rifle>>'s body and blocked Julie's path to stop her.

"Don't leave your post!"

"-----! But, that person said he has a child that looks around my age…….and was waiting for his return in his mother country……..! But even so…..but even so…..!"

"But you still have to calm down! We are now in a battle…… leave the sadness for later after everything has ended. Or else--- you'll die"

Persuaded by Lilith; Julie directed her sights strongly at <<K>> in regret.

With miserable feelings inside her chest, the silver girl placed her hand on my hand.

"Tooru……."

I don't know what I should tell her.

That's why I held her hands that covered mine.

"Thank you very much, Tooru"

Julie clenched back my hands.

I felt my chest squeezed tight when I saw the side of her painful and sad face.

Even when we were doing that; the echoes of gunshots and sword clashes did not stop from the garden.

Strong light together with the sound of explosions would sometime occur and unlike the smoke that comes out fire; it's probably the flash grenades and smoke grenades used by the Ethnarch.

To us, who have no means to attack from a distance in the back lines; we had no choice but to only look at the battle from afar.

However, the gold girl was not one of us.

Unlike the pistols in the Ethnarch's hands, Lilith's <<Gun (Rifle)>> was the reason why she's called the <<Exception>> and has the firepower to pierce through the <<Unit>> even though there's a distance in between.

The gold girl placed her elbows on the terrace handrail and pulled the trigger.

Zutaan!! A <<Ell.Libel (God's Destruction soldier)>> collapsed after receiving a head shot.

"As expected from you. It's amazing how you can fire accurately at this distance and what's more in this poor visibility"

"Fufuu, thank you. Once this is over, I will shoot Tooru's heart this time"

"…….I'll pass on that"

"Eh What? I couldn't hear you!"

Lilith shouted when her firing and my reply mixed together.

"Leave your chatting to that much, I told you to focus"

When I replied that while looking at another <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel>> falling down, Lilith puffed her red lips in dissatisfaction.

"I think I am maintaining my calmness since I have enough leisure to chat around though"

That's a comment fitting Lilith's usual leisurely actions.

Her determination to maintain her calmness in order to win and survive could be felt and it made her look trustworthy.

Zutaaan!! Flames burst out from the gun and caused an <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel>> to stagger as his shoulder was hit.

Even though he wasn't defeated, it was enough just to stop the enemy's movements for an instant. Taking that chance; a soldier jump out from the shadows and swung the <<Blaze>> to defeat the enemy, could be seen.

"Alright!"

"……Honestly, I don't think it's a situation where you can say alright you know. They are slowly closing in the distance"

As if to agree with Lilith's words; her face turned stern the more she saw the captain's face when he was giving out orders to his subordinates through wireless at the front gate.

Panic, anger, shock, fear----all types of emotions disappeared.

Although the Ethnarch were putting up a good fight, the battle situation was gradually tilting.

The main reason for the happening of that situation----was <<K >>.

The action he was taking was simple and clear. He was openly walking through the road which leads from the gate to the mansion. This overly obvious trap was being executed by him-the commander.

However, <<K>> who was wearing the <<Unit>> did not even take one step back nor did he stop as if a big amount of mock battles were slammed into him. Forget that; the Ethnarch that shows up instead will become the target of the enemy's assault rifle.

Even if they try to challenge him with their <<Blaze>> in hand, they were quickly defeated before even closing the gaps because they were handling an assault rifle. Even if they managed to dodge

the bullets and slip into his chest area, they would be defeated by his specialty-his knife skills.

"Oi! Can't you snipe that man!?"

"I have been shooting at him from just now. The reason why he's dodging all of it, enough to piss me off, is because he hasn't released his awareness from my sniping"

Lilith replied back with a slightly strong tone at Tora's irritation .

(He really is in a different class……)

But, it seems there are some strong << God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel >> other than <<K>> around and was giving our soldiers in-battle a harder fight.

Even though it was a good fight, one person after another was getting defeated.

"Kuh……!"

Death was swallowing the Ethnarchs and the figures of them being defeated were substituted with my comrades who were defeated at the dojo on that day.

The scene which I never wanted to ever see again was once again repeated in front of me after 2 years.

I was at my limit from folding my arms doing nothing while looking at that scene.

"Captain! Let me go to the front lines! I can't stand still any longer----"

"You idiot!! How can I send you trainees to the dangerous front lines!! Leave them to my subordinates and focus on defending here like you were ordered to!!"

"Who's the idiot!! As long as we are in this place, we are your comrades before trainees!! That's why I am saying I can't see my comrades getting killed!!"

"……I think we would be his subordinates instead of comrades in this case. So shouldn't the subordinate listen to the higher up's orders?"

"-----!! That's……."

Lilith jumped into the conversation while snipping.

"But, Captain-san. I personally agree with Tooru. Honestly speaking, things are looking working worse as it goes. Rather than losing our strength, I think it's better to send as many people to the front lines as possible you know? Especially Tooru and that girl----"

Half-way through her sentence, her sights ran towards me and Julie before she slightly raised her eyebrows in dissatisfaction.

"I think I won't lose to anyone in your team if it's this <<Duo>> . It's the autograph of the <<Exception>>-me"

It seems that Lilith's name----no, the name of the <<Exception> > was big. It's probably because she showed the abilities fitting her <<One of a kind blaze>>, the <<Gun>> in this fight.
Unrivaled Blaze
Rifle

The captain kept silent for awhile----before answering.

"It's just as you all say…….I'll leave my comrades in the front lines to you all. Help them as much as possible"

"I understand! Julie, you heard him so; it's going to be dangerous but-----will you follow me?"

"Ja---. I am the <<Duo>> who will protect your back"

She nodded with a strong answer before I looked towards Lilith .

"I want to say me too but, I will stay here. I don't want this but, going all-out support is my job now"

Lastly, I looked towards Tora who looks as if he was thinking something.

"Tora, come with us. We need your power"

Tora coming with us is reassuring. The range of battle variations will increase greatly compared to me and Julie alone but , the most important part is that he can cover with my lack of offence.

It's frustrating but, the possibility that I can defeat an enemy with the <<Unit>> other than using Thunder god's strike, is quite low.
Mjolnir

"Fuun. It won't be a <<Duo>> anymore if I go and that woman's autograph or whatever will probably be meaningless----but, I will prove that your choice is the correct one"

It was a long annoying way to put it but, it looks like he's going to follow us.

"…….Also, I can't help it if I hesitate in this situation. Use---this"

The moment Tora pulled out an unknown cylinder from the holster at his waist; the thicket around the terrace moved.

"--------!!"

The instant we looked over there, the thicket rustled and a shadow----<< Ell.Libel >> jumped out.
God's Destruction soldier

"Kuh!! An ambush!?"

The <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel>> that jumped out from the thicket swung his blade and attacked Tora.

2 rays of light from the blades clashed-----Tora's <<Katar Symbolic short sword>> sliced the <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel>>'s chest.

However, the enemy did not end like that.

Even though he collapsed, he used all his remaining strength to attack Tora.

Tora back-stepped to dodge the attack too but-----

"Tora, behind you!!"

The moment Julie's warning flew, another shadow jumped out from the thicket.

"Wha!?"

With his timing slightly off, Tora took a direct kick from the attacker since he could not handle the second ambush.

"Tora-----!!"

"Gahah……..Guh—haa……!!"

Tora slammed and broke the mansion's wall before getting buried under the rubble.

"Going for an ambush; not bad!!"

After the 2nd <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel>> attacked Tora; he pointed his blade towards Lilith without any hesitation.

The ambushers' goal was our sniper-Lilith.

Even though she blocked the swung knife with the gun's frame, she got overpowered by his strength.

But as expected from Lilith. She did not try to fight back and rolled back towards the terrace before kicking upwards with a form that's like overhead throw. The <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel>> that got kicked away flew over the terrace's handrail and fell to the ground but, he immediately stood up. It seems that the damage he received wasn't much at all.

But, we did not just look quietly at the scene.

Me, Julie and the captain moved to support Lilith but------

2 more shadows jumped out from the thicket.

"Kuh!! There were others around!!"

I blocked one knife thrust out from the 2nd enemy but----

The other knife was blocked by Julie who came in to cover me.

"Sorry Julie!!"

"Nai. I am Tooru's <<Duo>> after all"

Me and Julie, each took on one attacker while the captain took on the man who attacked Lilith and Tora.

In this situation where allies and enemies were mashed together ; they probably won't use their assault rifle.

In this situation, we could focus on the enemy in front of us.

The attackers and I looked at each other and slowly closed in the gaps----the enemy was the first one that moved.

While making *Hyuu**Hyuu* sounds; even though the knife moved with we dodged the blade filled with hostility and performed a low kick. However, that was a feint and the moment the enemy respond to my kick by attempting to block, I filled in the gaps with one step.

I diverted the knife he thrust at me with my <<Shield>> before pulling his arms and landing an elbow blow when he lost his balance.

The power was enough to destroy a normal person's internal organs but, the attacker only groaned.

(Damn, even though I felt the resistance……!!)

The moment I wondered if I should use my Thunder god's strike[Mjolnir]----

"Tooru, dodge this!!"

Lilith's order flew.

A gunshot echoed almost at the same time I dodged and the << God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel >> collapsed while making noises.

"That was a great help, Lilith!"

"Fufu it's a nice wife and husband combination I guess"

"……."

(Wait, how's Julie and the captain……!?)

From what I could see; Julie defeated an << God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel >> with a diagonal slash down his shoulders.

For the captain------

Just as expected from someone who was assigned a team; he's quite strong.

With the <<Spear>> in his hands, he utilized its reach to prevent the attacker from entering his special range. With his sharp stabs; the << God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel >> slowly suffered more and more wounds. Soon, the enemy lost his patience and charged into his chest area but the captain used the butt end of the spear to counter him and finished him off with a stab.

After stabbing the spearhead of the <<Spear>> into the ground; the attacker fell to his knees before collapsing.

"Fuu, I heard the stories but; the <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel>> are quite strong"

The moment the captain exhaled-----

Hyuu 2 rays glowed and sliced the air.

The glow turned into blades and attacked the captain.

Together with a dull sound; 2 knives deeply sliced his back.

"Captain!!"

"Gu-ah……"

The Captain groaned before crossing over the handrails and fell to the ground.

(Kuh!! Another team----no, this knife, don't tell me….!?)

"Fufu, all the ambush team could do was cause you all to fall into disorder huh"

"<<K>>!!"

He probably reached us when we were disordered in the ambush.

In front of the mansion-------standing at the fountain at the hall; <<K>> was making an eerie smile.

"However, they accomplished the mission given to them. Their role was to disorder the back lines and ***allow the team to advance forward***"

I understood what <<K>> words meant when 5 shadows stood behind him.

Shadows------the <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel>> evenly pointed their assault rifle at us.

The sound of sword clashes and gunshots could no longer be heard from behind.

The only thing that could be heard was the sounds of patrol cars and fire trucks from far away.

"You…….bas-tard; how dare you…….my subordinates……"

Even though the captain lifted his face in anger while still on the ground; he lost all his strength and lost consciousness.

"Damn……! <<K>> you bastard!!"

"It's an honor to meet you tonight too after that day a few days ago, Kokonoe Tooru. Did that girl have a healthy life after that?"

"What healthy, don't screw with me……..! Why- why did you use Miyabi?"

"…….when we were on the boat; do you remember the time we called that operation the <<Selection>>?"

"What is that related to Miyabi"

"Fufu, don't be impatient and listen closely. That operation, was something to show the higher-ups of the organization I am affiliated about how much the <<God's Destruction Team>> can take on the <<Exceed>>, who are known throughout the underworld------yes, we used you all to let them evaluate the <<Unit>>. However other than that; I received specific orders by the <<Equipment Smith>>-dono to evaluate the students"

"Our evaluation?.....now that I think about it, the guy that attacked Miyabi was acting as if he was observing us-------"

"Yes. Including the time for our plan; I had several <<Ell.Libel>> slip into the island to take data from all of you during the time you all are in the island. <<Smith>>-dono picked up a weak minded student within you all. After a few days, we tried approaching you all when one of my accomplice brazenly from the school"

"So the girl was Miyabi huh…….however, why would you do that!?"

"We wanted to inform the <<Blaze Witch>> on how powerful an <<Exceed>> would reach after gaining the <<Unit>>'s power.

It was annoying to me but, this was something <<Smith>>-dono requested. Better than words, it's much easier and more effective to show her.

"……I can't forgive you. You guys hurt Miyabi for such a dumb reason!!"

"Hahaha, it's not like I want you to forgive me……but, I am interested in how you won't forgive me"

"I'll let you taste my This fist one more time!!"

"…….Tooru, calm down!"

Lilith stopped me the moment I was about to jump towards the hall.

"I understand your feelings but, even if you dash in with anger; you'll only get defeated before you can do anything! That's why, be calmer even if it's little…….!"

"Kuh……!!"

Lilith was right.

The 5 guns were pointed at us whole time I was talking with << K>>.

I would probably become Swiss cheese if I made a reckless move.

"Thank Miss Bristol, Kokonoe Tooru. It won't be interesting if you die right away before I could repay back what you done before"

"Not interesting? It's like you're having fun with this……"

"Fufu, this is a game after all"

"A Game…..!? Don't screw with me!! What game is this after you killed!!"

"I am not screwing around. You all know that there are rules in this fight right? Then, how can you not call this a game? ……. although, this is a game that takes other lives- the game called << Killing Game>>"

After hearing his screwed up words saying that this was a game , Julie who was quiet until now, opened her mouth in anger.

"……..even if this was a game, why would you drag unrelated people into this fight? Your opponent should be us……!"

The silver girl pointed the <<Saber>> at <<K>> while her flames of anger were flickering in her red eyes.
Ruby eyes

"It's the signal to start the game. In order to let you know our < <Power>>, we have been notified to make it flashy"

"For such a reason…….!!"

"Hold your horses there. No matter how fast you might be, it's impossible to dodge all 5 guns"

Julie glared at <<K>> and clenched her teeth which was loud enough for me to hear the creak.

<<K>> moved his sights from Julie to me.

"Well then, Kokonoe Tooru. Do you know what situation you are in right now? Now let's hear something in this situation. In the previous fight, you said that you would "Protect" Julie Sigtuna right?.....however, can you still say the same thing in this situation.

"O-of course…..!! I-----"

"Are you serious? Do you really think that you will be able to protect Julie Sigtuna, Miss Bristol and the Captain-dono? Even in this situation where all this guns are pointed at you!?"

"Kuh……..!!"

Protect, I want to protect them------

I have the will for that but I can't reply back with words.

Even I know this.

It's probably just some kind of pipe dream, even if I say I want to protect them in this situation.

But, even so------

"But even so, I will still protect them!!"

I roared.

No matter what situation it may be, I can't lose my will to protect no matter what.

"Kuh……ha-hahahahaha!! How foolish! Looking away from reality and only talk about your ideals; how truly funny is this. Hahahaha, Ha---hahahaha!!"

<<K>> laughed.

He was making fun of the foolish me.

But I still won't give up.

I can't give up since I roared.

(Think! Think of what I can do now!! There has to be something, there must……!!)

"……..Tooru"

Although I was grinding my teeth while he was laughing loudly in front of me; Lilith whispered to me when I was thinking of a way to reverse this situation.

"Will you cooperate with me?"

"……what are you going to do?"

"Even if it's a small one, can you make a chance for me? If you do that, I will stop that stupid laugh"

Those were trustworthy words.

It's true that if it's Lilith then, it's possible to reverse this situation if I just make a moment for her.

Then i-----

"I understand, I'll do something!!"

I just have to use all my strength to make that chance.

"I am counting on you, my husband♪"

Leaving that last word aside, I once again jumped into thought.

I started thinking about how we should act, what weapons we have, anything usable; as long it's something that can be done here -------

I thought of one possibility.

(----! Oh yeah, if I am correct…….)

I looked towards ***that*** and confirmed its existence.

(Found it!! If I use that……!!)

The problem is how to get there.

The moment I moved to get that, <<K>> will probably mercilessly order them to fire someone.

Whether it was a stroke of bad luck or good luck; judging by his words, it seems that <<K>> has not noticed Tora who is collapsed under the rubble.

If that's the case then, the person with highest possibility to get shot will probably be the captain who was lying face down.

Even if the captain wasn't the target, it will be my loss if anyone of the people here dies.

I just have to think of a way to reach that in order to avoid that.

(------! If it's that way……no, it's just too dangerous……..)

The captain before myself.

It all ended there, even though I tried thinking once more for another way.

<<K>> stopped laughing.

But, a light smile was still stuck on his face like usual.

However-----

"Aah, you're really a weird one. What "I will protect you"…… …….to be able to say that under these circumstances------"

His smile then disappeared.

"How irritating and annoying that is, Kokonoe Tooru!!"

<<K>> shouted angrily.

This was the first time <<K>> showed his raging emotions.

"Okay then, I will kill them one after another and will repeat the same question each time!!"

Julie and Lilith lowered their hips at <<K>>'s announcement.

No matter how high their physical abilities may be, the possibility to dodge the assault rifles shot by 5 people at the same time is low.

And i------

(Kuh……..! I, have to make up my mind!!)

I released my stance.

"…….what are you doing, Kokonoe Tooru"

"Who knows; I wonder that too"

I shrugged my shoulders and slowly walked forward without making a stance.

"I remember telling you that you'll turn to Swiss cheese if you move right?"

"I can't punch you if I don't move right?"

It's going to be alright.

<<K>> was for some reason fixed on breaking my mind.

That's why he won't shoot immediately.

I walked forward believing that.

I slowly walked pass the terrace while harboring the weird feeling of believing the enemy; and got closer to the main door.

I done that while limping my hands down and was defenseless.

What I am doing now was close to what <<K>> done tonight.

Walking brazenly turned into one plan just like that

In order to grasp my thoughts, <<K>> stood at the door and stared at my every move with those sharp eyes before warning me once more when I faced him face to face.

"……..this is my last warning, Kokonoe Tooru. My subordinates will kill your comrades the moment you take another step. Especially since the person over there has no way to dodge; he will definitely die. If that's okay with you then----come"

"If so……."

In response to his warning, i-----

"Let's go……..!!"

Made a stance.

I spread my legs, lowered my hips and pulled my fist like pulling back a bow.

There's around 7 meter to reach <<K>>. That distance is enough for me to reach in a breath with my physique now.

"I think this is unlikely but, are you planning to jump from that distance there to punch me? Or to my subordinates? I acknowledge the power of that move but, I think you should understand that pulling the trigger is faster than jumping over her to swing your fist"

"I understand that! But------I have already achieved my goal the moment I got to this point!!"

I shouted and kicked the ground.

The group of << God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel >> pulled the trigger without warning just as what <<K>> said.

2 were aimed to Julie and Lilith each while the remaining one aimed at the fallen Captain.

While i-----***stepped towards the position below the captain***.

Unlike the terrace which has an obstacle known as the handrail, there are no obstacles towards the captain from the front door.

It was possible to reach the front of the captain slightly faster than the storm of bullets.

I lowered my body and prepared my <<Shield>>.

I moved, while bullets I couldn't block with my <<Shield>> graze my body.

The reason why I jumped under the captain was not so that I could protect him.

It was so that I could use the item used by the Ethnarth.

While protecting the captain, I forcefully pulled the pouch equipped on his hips and threw it at the group.

The bullets they fired pierced through the pouch before it could reach <<K>> and the group.

---including the smoke grenade inside.

An explosion occurred and a smokescreen was set up in front of <<K>> and the group.

The <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel>> quickly tried to spread out but------

"Lilith!!"

"Yes, it's enough!!"

We were a moment faster.

The moment their sights were slightly blinded by the screen, was my answer to Lilith's order for a moment.

The <<Rifle Gun>> continuously released flames while it was pointed at the group of <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel >> who jumps out from the smoke radius.

The <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel >> suffered headshots one after another without any mistake in aiming-----but, one managed to dodge her bullet and point his gun at her.

"------kuh!!"

There was a slight gap after shooting her <<Rifle Gun>>.

However, it was a critical chance.

But------

"I won't let you……..!!"

Giiin!! Together with a high screech, Julie cut down the gun aimed at Lilith.

Without losing sight of the enemies movements the moment the screen was set up, she jumped off from the terrace the moment she saw a <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel >> dodge the bullet.

The 2nd slash performed by the silver girl, crossed with the path made by the 1st attack and sliced diagonally upwards at the <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel>>'s body. The <<Unit>> was sliced apart and the man made a small groan before collapsing to the ground.

"Impossible…."

The curtain of smoke cleared out and <<K>> made an expression of shock after seeing all his subordinates down.

"The tables have turned, <<K>>"

"Kuh……!!"

His shapely face distorted.

It was proof that he acknowledges the situation has turned greatly disadvantage to him.

"I'll say this just in case, I am not like Sakuya so I will not let you get away easily after being told to let you retreat"

"……I think the same sadness from tonight will reoccur again if we let you get away"

The girls, who have gold and silver hair respectively, took position to make <<K>> stand in our center.

"Prepare yourself<<K>>. You're going to take a suitable punishment"

Crack I cracked my fist while telling my intentions.

"Fufu, it's true that the tables have turned"

Even though his words sound like he regained his calmness, he could not hide the anxiousness coming out from his tone.

The smile he was making does not have any leisure in it.

"But, as an important member of the <<God's Destruction[Libel] Team >>, I can't be captured this easily. If you want to defeat me then, struggle to the death!!"

"Let's do this you two!!"

[Ja----!] [Leave it to me!]

I know <<K>>'s strength with my own skin.

The 2 girls moved at the same time I closed in the gaps. In order to avoid breaking the triangle, each of us maintained our distance-----and closed in on <<K>>.

Of course, <<K>> wouldn't stay quiet and let us get closer. He turned towards Lilith and performed a feint. However, it's just as expected from Lilith. She pulled the trigger twice at the same time she dodged his swift knife with ease.

While strengthening his guard, <<K>> lowered his head and dodged both the bullets but Julie continued the attack by swinging

her <<Twin blades>>. The crossing white blades were guarded with his armguard and sparks were scattered with metallic echoes.

Double

<<K>> did not use any strength to guard and just used the momentum of the blade. At the same time, he turned his body and performed a back blow to counter her. However, his hand was holding his knife.

Taken advantage of the follow through, the blade was reaching face but, I blocked the path with my <<Shield>> and stopped it.

"Kokonoe, Tooru……!!"

"I will protect her-----that's what I said!!"

The body blow I performed while shouting, pierced into <<K>> and made his body bend into a < shape before he got blown away. It however, did not give much damage to an opponent wearing the unit so he stood up immediately right after.

A bullet was shot again and it scratched <<K>>'s cheeks.

I and Julie separated to the left and right side and took a triangle formation like just now.

"Oh my, not allowing me to take a rest huh, what a busy bunch ……however, it doesn't change the fact that 3 vs 1 is disadvantageous"

"So are you going to use that thing at your hips to perform a siege breakthrough, like last time?"

Lilith pointed at the grenade launcher equipped on <<K>>'s hip .

"There's no way such a thing would hit you <<Exceed>> unless it's a surprise. I am feeling a little regretful for not taking an assault rifle if I knew this situation was going to happen"

Since the firing rate of a launcher was slower than that of an assault rifle, it won't hit us unless we pay attention to it.

And because he can't make use of continuous firing, it's a weapon that isn't worthy for <<K>>'s trust.

"Okay then, I only have one more knife huh. Nothing can be done anymore, was what I wanted to say but-----"

While saying that, <<K>> pulled out his knife and placed his hands on the circle storage which became empty.

"Let's begin the overturning scenario now!!"

The same time his tone strengthened, <<K>> threw the circle storage at Julie.

Of course, there's no way Julie would take that attack even if it's a sudden move.

---normally that would happen.

I saw it during Julie's dodge.

I saw the moment a red light shine on the circle storage.

"-----! Julie, Ruunnn!!"

The same time I send out a warning, the circle storage exploded with a loud bang.

Luckily, the explosion was further away from Julie, and her uniform only got muddy because the silver girl fell on the ground after jumping away.

<<K>> might have missed his timing from his anxiousness of being surrounded by us.

But, he had one plan------he managed achieving creating a chance from us.

<<K>> aimed for the moment of the explosion to move.

Even though Lilith shot her <<Gun(Rifle)>> from immediate response , <<K>> barely dodged it and performed a knee kick with the momentum of his charge to her stomach.

Having blown away; Lilith destroyed the handrails and fell to the terrace.

"uu…….kuh……."

While she was down, the gold girl pressed her sides and made a painful expression.

"Lilith!!"

"Hahahahaha, should you really be worried about Miss Bristol? Kokonoe Tooru. It's my time to overturn the tables"

<<K>> who defeated Lilith, laughed loudly in front of the front door.

"------, Crap!!"

Yes, our situation not only was overturned.

It changed to a situation which is connected to our losing condition of this battle.

"Fufu, I wanted to choose to win by having my subordinates defeat you all before I torture and finally kill you all. Well, it's something I can't help with"

<<K>> swung his knife and countless glints occurred.

Kiiin!! The door was sliced into several parts before collapsing .

Losing the door separating from the outer world, the atrium hall------and the giant stairs could be seen.

Further up after climbing the stairs, a giant door could be seen too.

"Kuh……I won't let you!!"

This fights had a rule-----losing condition set up.

We will lose the moment he pass through the big door at the 2nd floor located inside the hall.

"Hahaha, it's useless!!"

Even though I swung my fist at <<K>>, he dodged it with a back step------and at the same time danced into the mansion hall. That specifically means that he was getting closer to the goal which was the door at the 2nd floor hall.

"Reaching this far and, losing so many comrades, how can I lose because of such a rule!!"

I stepped into the mansion to chase after <<K>>.

Of course, the silver girl also aimed to run into the mansion to follow me.

However, Julie who got dragged down by the explosion would most likely not reach <<K>>.

That's why I will stop him.

If I can slightly lower his pace then, Julie should be able to catch up.

Both of will defeat <<K>> and defend the door.

That's the fight we can do now.

"<<K>>----------!!"

Further inside the door was a spacious hall that looks as if a dancing ball was opened.

<<K>> stopped his legs and turned around right in front the stairs located deeper inside.

Thanks to that, I managed to catch up to him.

Even without knowing the reason, I don't care since I get to catch up.

Without stopping my legs, I used the momentum and jumped up to the sky-----and performed a kick.

Immediately-------

"……just like the scenario"

<<K>> sneered.

"What did you say……!?"

Just like the punch last time, he dodged my kick as well. <<K>> dodged by jumping up and landed half-way up the stairs. However, the one that made me lose my composure more was the words <<K>> said.

"What do you mean by just like your scenario, <<K>>!?"

"……it's that my wish wasn't to fulfill the conditions for victory. My wish-----"

Those sharp eyes were pointed to someone not me.

"Is to see you unable to protect someone!!"

The person his eyes were directed to-----was my <<Duo>>.

It was the silver girl running into the hall with her red eyes (Ruby eyes) fluttering.

"I ***don't remember saying that there is only one separated force***, Kokonoe Tooru!!"

Bachinn. The same time <<K>> snapped his fingers and made a signal---------

- Gashaaan*!! 4 << Ell.Libel (God's Destruction soldier) >> infiltrated into the hall by breaking through the 2nd floor windows.

All of them had assault rifles and all those guns----were pointed at Julie.

"Julie, Run-------!!"

It was almost the same time that they pulled the trigger when I shouted-----

Gagagagagagagaggagagagagagagagagaagaga!!!

Ear bursting gunshots became the hall's BGM.

The instant Julie noticed that she was the enemy's target, she changed her direction and jumped away----but, she was unable to dodge the guns firing from 4 directions.

Red flowers blossomed within the raging storm of continuous bullets.

"Julie----------!!"

I jumped into the storm without any hesitation.

Of course, I wasn't safe too but, I did not bother about that and caught that small body before falling to the ground.

Immediately after, <<K>> signaled to stop shooting and the hall fell into silence.

There was no one moving-----except me.

"Uu…..Guuh……..!! Ju-Julie……..Julie!!"

While frowning my face from the scorching pain, I called out to my precious partner.

The girl covered in blood was closing her eyes but, she moved her eyelids after a few calling.

"Hn…..Too-ru?-----uh, this is bad, the blood is…….Kuh…….!!"

With her eyes opened, Julie panicked when she saw my uniform smeared in red but-----

She made a stern expression at the pain running through her body.

"Are you okay?"

"Ja--……..few hits on the leg, one bullet in my arm and sides each. My head was only grazed. Forget me, how about you……"

"It's nothing much"

Although my shoulders and thighs got shot, the rest were all scratches.

Even though the sting of the wounds gets harder as time passes by; I was much better off compared to Julie.

<<K>> was making a joyful smile and ridiculing us at our situation.

"Wonderful! To think that you will jump into a storm of bullets without hesitation!! I never would have thought that you would prove to me that your intentions to protect weren't a lie!!..... however, how disappointing. I wanted to see you watch your partner die in front of you"

Preparing another team while we were in disorder from the ambushers.

Even allowing our easy reversal was so that he could dangle a bait called victory.

Even him missing the timing of the circle storage exploding, was not to defeat Julie but rather, his aim was to delay the timing for her to enter the hall.

Everything was moving according to <<K>>'s scenario.

---Except for one point.

"Seriously, a mistake happens at the end of my scenario…….. if it was according to plan, I was going to ask your comment while you are in tears from failing to protect her"

"…….It's something a monster would ever understand. This feeling of wanting to protect someone precious!!"

The hall was wrapped in silence again.

<<K>> placed his hands on his face to cover his eyes-----before slowly opening his mouth.

"Yes, I don't understand at all. The wellbeing of oneself is everything to humans. Even though protecting someone precious is bullshit, you are seriously trying to make that reality; even with your life on the line……..i really don't understand. That's why I understood something. Kokonoe Tooru, at this very spot----"

His eyes were stared at me as if he was trying to pierce through me, from the gaps of his fingers.

"I will end you"

His joy disappeared and a cold hostility was released.

Clear killing intent were inside <<K>>'s eyes.

"No matter how strong your will to protect is, you can't overcome this situation with just feelings!! I wanted to see you fail to protect someone precious but, I will vomit if I continue looking at you any more than this!!"

<<K>> raised his right hand and the group of <<God's Destruction soldier Ell.Libel >> prepared the guns to match with him.

The moment he lowers his hand, it was obvious that a raging storm of bullets will occur again.

We have no way to run now.

Immediately, the words of the black clothed girl floated in my mind.

"No matter how wonderful your determination may be, the world will not guarantee you its acceptance……that is even more so, since this world is filled with ill intents"

Those words were about to come true and those ill intents are about to peel my fangs away.

It was about to rip apart my determination into millions of pieces without mercy.

"Die-----While knowing the fact that your small <<Shield>> cannot protect anyone"

Just like what <<K>> said, I can't block the bullets coming from 4 directions with my shield.

(Damn……..! At the very least, just Julie------)

I hugged Julie to hide her from the guns.

Julie sensed what I was about to do from my actions which I think might have a possibility to save her, even though it might be little.

"Nai. You mustn't Tooru! Leave me and run away…….!!"

"How can I leave you!! I already vowed! On that day, during that time I hugged Julie like this, that I would become your strength! If I can't achieve that then at the very least; until the end i -----"

But, I couldn't finish my sentence.

That's because an angry shout echoing inside the hall interrupted my voice.

"You……Idiooooott!!"

My friend---- at the collapsed wall, Tora shouted in anger while pressing his head to stop the blood from flowing out.

"You vowed not to die! You said that you wouldn't be able to protect anything if you died!! Then don't give up!!"

"Tora……."

He's right; I was close to breaking the promise I made.

The promise to protect Julie and the promise I exchanged to Miyabi that I would come back with everyone.

For the girl in my arms and the girl waiting for my return; I have to accomplish and fulfill my vows.

That's why i-----

"I will not give up…..!! I will live and protect everyone!!"

"Tooru……!"

Julie held onto my clothes tightly.

"Fuuhahahahahaha, not giving up in this situation? Even though a fool like you should know that you are in a critical situation. Or what, are you bullshitting now just to escape from the fear of death? Hahahahaha!!"

"Noo, the guy known as Kokonoe Tooru I know of don't know the words of giving up! He's just an idiot!! That's why----"

Tora threw something to me.

"For you to remain as Kokonoe Tooru; use that and show him your determination!!"

The object I received was the black cylinder Tora tried to hand to me before we got ambushed-----a special shaped Jet injector.

"This is…….!"

I immediately understood what he meant when I was handed over this.

Just a few days ago; I rejected the <<Power>> inside this injector.

But, right now, I gripped tightly the Injector into my chest for my clear determination----my vow.

"Yeah, I understand. I will show you him my determination!!"

I seek <<Power>>.

In order to enforce my determination.

In order to protect people and in order to protect my promise.

"Hahahahaha!! Determinations won't become power!! Just how foolish are you lot!!"

"Nooo, determinations will become power!! <<K>> I will show you our determination-----the true power of the <<Blaze>>, the manifestation of our <<Soul>>!!"

"What you are saying is just useless struggling!! Well then, taste the moment of unsuccessful attempt to change your determination into power with your body!!"

The same time <<K>> swung his hand------

I pressed the injector into the nape of my neck.

"Fireeeee-----!!"

"I will protect!! I will definitely protect, Julie, everyone--------!!"

The moment he swung his hands down and bullets filled with killing intent were coming from 4 directions----I pulled the trigger.

---<<Flame>> bursts out immediately.

The <<Flame>> raged and covered us as if it sucked us into a dome.

Right when countless hostile bullets were fired at us, all of it were blown aside nonetheless----

And----

The color changed.

From red to azure-----the <<Flame>> changed.

Light poured out from inside and-----

Immediately, the <<Flame>> burst aside and disappeared.

Within the world loss of sound and only silence in control-----

<<K>> squeezed out his husky voice.

“Impo-sibble……..why…why-----“

He looked at me while I carried Julie up.

“Why are you still alive, Kokonoe Tooru-----!!”

“How many times are you planning to make me repeat myself, <<K>>. It’s so that----I can protect my precious person!!”

I knew it the moment I achieved the <<Rank sublimation(Level up)>>.

The true <<Power> my <<Soul>>----my <<Blaze>> holds.

And with the true <<Power>> inside my <<Blaze>>, I blocked off the storm of bullets.

“Kuh……..!! Then----I just have to keep firing until you die!!”

<<K>> ordered the group of <<Ell.Libel(God’s Destruction soldier)>> again.

Not even taking 1 second, the moment the group of males were about to execute their captain’s order by pulling the trigger-----

4 shots were fired with a speed that sounded like it happened at the same time.

The bullets accurately pierced into the heads of the 4 <<Ell.Libel(God’s Destruction soldier)>>.

“Fufuu, I have to make some appearances ♪”

Kneeling on the entrance, even though she was breathing heavily and her shoulders were shaking, the girl with blonde hair(Yellow Topaz) winked.

“Kuh, Bristol…….!! I didn’t think you can still move…!!”

His scenario was completely destroyed and <<K>>’s graceful face distorted hideously.

"Julie, wait for me here. I will end this quick so I will tend to your wounds after I am done"

"Ja---. I will wait for you"

Chirin her bell rang when the silver girl nodded.

After I lowered Julie to the ground for her to sit, I looked back at <<K>>------

"<<K>>. You've been doing what you've liked until now……
…you hurt Julie, you used Miyabi and robbed many people of their lives…….i will not forgive you for all that. That's why-----"

I pulled my fist and took a stance as if I was about to fire a bow.

"I will end this with this attack!!"

I kicked the ground and ran towards <<K>>.

"Kokonoe…….Tooru-----!!"

<<K>> prepared the grenade launcher but I still charged at him without caring.

With hostility and ill intentions, <<K>> pulled the trigger-----

The fired grenade approached me.

I can't dodge since it would hit Julie behind if I do so.

No----there was no need to dodge.

I thrust out my left hand which has my <<Shield>> equipped and----

Roared.

"Sever the fang----<<Aegis Desire>>!!"

I released the true <<Power>> my <<Blaze>> with the <<Word that carried strength>> and created a barrier.

The grenade touched the half-transparent barrier I created around me.

A powerful explosion occurred.

The power was enough to kill an <<Exceed>> if it landed but----

It could not even scratch me.

"Impossible!?"

<<K>> distorted his face in shock when I jumped out from the explosion unwounded.

A zone which rejects all attacks.

That's the true <<Power>> sleeping inside the <<Shield>>.

"Pierce----through!!"

"Fu……I…….lost……"

In the center of a giant hole opened up like a crater, <<K>> said that while lying down.

With his <<Unit>> destroyed, <<K>> has lost all strength to fight.

But even so------

(I have to do it……..)

Thinking about the victims that appeared on tonight and the last battle, I should finish him off and close the curtains of the fight with the <<God's Destruction Team>>.

Libel

"……..i have to take vengeance for the comrades that got killed"

"Kuh, kuku…….go ahead, feel free to do so…….losing means death…….that's the life of a soldier ……..but getting killed by you huh……It feels really disgusting……."

I raised my fist without answering.

Killing----someone.

I know this would happen sooner or later.

I am an <<Avenger>> so, it will definitely happen someday.

However, I didn't think I would kill someone else other than him.

Because of that, I was slightly hesitant to end a life.

Even though I know <<K>> is a demon that stole many lives away.

"What's wrong, Kokonoe Tooru……..go ahead, kill me……..!!"

But, the fight will not end as long as this man is alive.

That's why I have to end <<K>>'s life here-----I must end it.

I decided to end his life.

"Die……..!!"

"Wait, Kokonoe Tooru"

A halt came----and it made me stop my fist right before I slammed it at <<K>>.

"Chairman……."

The big door at the 2nd floor was opened and I saw the black clothed girl and Mikuni-sensei when I looked up.

"You should also understand that the man over there has no strength to fight anymore. If that's the case, you don't have to force yourself to dirty your hands. We will handle the rest"

Handle the rest------which means, the academy side will take one the final dirty clean up.

But, I swung my head at that offer.

"My hands are already covered in blood…….many comrades died today. Everyone wouldn't have died if I didn't reject the <<Sublimation Ceremony>> on that day------I should have been able to protect them"

"……that's the reason why your hands are dirty?"

"Yes. The ones that killed them were <<K>>, the <<God's Destruction Team>>, and……me. That's why------"

"End your conceit there, Kokonoe Tooru. The real person who should take the blame for today's incident, is me because I agreed with tonight's <<Killing game>>"

"No way……"

The black clothed girl has not said anything wrong.

It's because the chairman was the one that ordered us and the Ethnarch to fight the <<God's Destruction Team>>.

But, even though I agree with her logic, my emotions won't agree.

I can't agree that her small shoulders have to bear the responsibility of a huge number of deaths.

The girl then announced again with a loud voice.

“Everything that happen tonight is my responsibility”

But, the chairman continued on after leaving a beat.

“But, if there is a strong regret still inside you then fight for their sake----and protect others for their sake. That is the best offering you can do for them”

The words of the girl 6 years younger than me penetrate deep into my heart.

At the same time, I felt a strong gentleness in it too.

She tried to lighten my heavy heart even if it’s a little.

Which is why I bow my head.

With my intentions filled with apology.

At this moment, Mikuni-sensei who was quiet until now, opened his mouth.

“Alright, leave him to the academy. That’s alright with you?”

“……..yes, I leave him to you”

Somewhere inside me I was still------I felt that but, I decided to leave him to them.

“Okay, I will go treat my comrades now”

After saying that, I was about to head to the others but-----

"……..wait, there……Kokonoe, Tooru……."

<<K>>'s words stopped me.

"Let me, ask you, one question……why, would……..go so far , to protect someone……..just, why……."

"……"

I wondered if I should answer him.

I don't think this man would understand even if I told him.

I hesitated but-----

I told him without any falsehood.

"…….i……..i got protected by someone precious because I had no <<Power>> and because of that, I lost that person. That's why I don't want to lose anyone anymore. That's why; I want to protect someone as long as they are within my reach-----that's all"

"Fuu…….how, naïve……..You're really an annoying guy……."

I silently turned away from <<K>> while flames of hatred were flickering inside his sharp eyes.

"Tooru!!----------Kuh……!"

Once I got back, the silver hair girl stood up while frown her face in pain.

On top of that, it was really bad since she was about to run to me.

She wobbled and was about to fall but, I ran towards her quickly and stopped her.

"Don't force yourself"

"Sorry……but----"

With her face looking up, Julie made a small smile.

"You manage to keep your promise with Miyabi"

"Yeah, that's right. And----also your promise"

"Ja---. Thank you for protecting me"

"I promised to definitely protect you……..of course, I will still do so from now on"

"Ja---♪"

Gyuu Julie hugged my body.

"Well then, I am going to fix your wounds so-----let's go back together"

After saying that, I carried Julie and headed outside.

Like this, the battle that occurred tonight has reached its end.

Afterwards; another Ethnarch team reached to performed rescue and fire extinguishing operations but luckily 7 survivors were confirmed. Including the captain, all of them were immediately transported to a hospital belonging to Dawn organization.

We were transported to the station with a helicopter prepared by the Ethnarch team to return back from the mansion.

During the ride, I heard the reason why Mikuni-sensei handed him the injector before we set off, from Tora.

It was prepared in consideration of the danger level in this mission but, since I rejected the authority to perform the << Sublimation Ceremony>>, it was handed over to Tora to keep.

The reason why Tora didn't give it to me the moment we knew that a battle was about to occur was because, he thought of the risk that might happen if I failed the sublimation. Because of that, many people lost their lives and it seems that Tora felt greatly responsible for that.

During that moment, Lilith-----

"It's too late for that; whatever you say now are only after-thoughts. Nobody would regret if you always take the best actions. The most important is what you do in the future. Don't stop your legs from regret and focus on the best conclusion as much as possible before acting next time"

After saying that, Tora replied, ***even I know that***.

But, Tora looked a little better and at the same time, I felt some weight taken away from me; I thanked Lilith in my heart.

Regarding the explosions that occurred at the mansion, it became a great deal until it could not be hidden and was brought up in the news. However the covered contents were [A terrorist organization planned to cause havoc to kidnap a Princess who secretively came over to Japan from a certain country, to conduct medical studies].

Many casualties appeared and the attack has caught the attention of many eyes but, the curtain closed without having the existence of the <<Exceed>> and <<God's Destruction[Libel] Team>> exposed to the public.

"Welcome back, Tooru-kun. Julie-chan, Lilith-san, and Tora-kun ; good work out there"

When we got back to the academy, Miyabi, Tachibana, Tatsu and Tsukimi came to pick us up.

"I'm back, Miyabi…….i kept our promise"

"Un, Thank you"

Originally, I had a lot of things I wanted to tell them but, I decided to head towards the medical center immediately to get our wounds treated.

Julie got shot in five places, Lilith's ribs were broken, Tora has head injuries; everyone was in a mess.

Although Lilith went back to her room with Sara after her treatment, Julie and Tora were admitted in and had to go through tonight in their own respective rooms.

For me; I used the <<Duo>> as an excuse to get permission to stay in Julie's medical room; and now we are here at this point.

"Good night, Tooru"

"Good night, Julie. You'll recover faster if you take a good rest"

"Ja---"

After a small nod, Julie closed her eyes.

I agreed with Julie's request to hold her hands until she sleeps but-----

She probably got attacked by the sleepiness from the fatigue when she closed her eyes.

I exhaled in relief when I saw the silver girl started making sleeping noises.

(I am glad I was able to protect her……..)

By sublimating to <<Level 4 IV>>, I awakened my <<Soul>>'s <<Power>>----the <<Aegis Desire>>.

No matter if it's a blade or bullet, the defensive energy barrier will not allow the fangs of hostility to pass through.

However-----

It's the total opposite of the <<Power>> I seek.

Instead of hurting others, it's something used to protect others.

Even though I failed to protect someone precious to me on that summer day.

"……..but you know, Otoha. I succeeded in protecting her. I protected someone precious……"

I mumbled while looking at the hand connected to mine.

I could feel the warmth----the proof of life from that hand.

I couldn't protect my precious person and comrades last time.

I also failed to protect many people.

However----

It's certain that I protected this silver girl.

Like this, the curtains of the 3rd battle with <<God's Destruction (Libel) Team>> was dropped------was what I thought.

However, I found out that our battle has not ended yet.

Report has it that, the car escorting <<K>> was attacked and his whereabouts were lost.

Part 2

"…….those were some kind words, Sakuya-sama"

While looking at the young man running towards the silver girl, Mikuni talked to his master-the black clothed girl.

"It will be a problem if he gets smashed her now that he crossed a wall"

From Sakuya's judgment, even if Tooru performed the <<Sublimation Ceremony>> a few days ago; the Sublimation will end in a failure. However, she thinks that the reason why he succeeded the <<Rank sublimation (Level up)>> tonight was because he has gained a much stronger determination-----<<Soul>>.

People that overcome great crisis and danger will be able to pull out the true <<Power>> of the <<Blaze>>.

Without Tooru noticing, he has answered Sakuya's expectations magnificently.

Of course, the reason why Sakuya agreed with the <<Killing Game>> was because she was expecting this ending.

"Protect means to prevent death. A strong determination to live has the possibility to reach the <<Absolute Duo>> someday; that's what I think"

Until now, Sakuya has met talents equal-maybe even more than him but, regarding a single point of showing a strong determination during a predicament; Tooru comes out remarkably without contest.

The <<Irregular>>'s <<Power>>----a <<Soul>> with a strong will.

Will Kokonoe Tooru be the best material that the black clothed girl seeks?

Only God----knows that answer.

*Ka**ka**ka*------in the Gogmagog far eastern branch, the old man called the <<Equipment Smith>> was walking on the path in a fast pace as if his anger was raging inside his heart.

"Perfect unification-----even though you think school life is an impure entity, we think that it is necessary. You, who think that

soldiers, which are purely specialized only to fight, are efficient; will probably never understand this though. *Giggle* *giggle*……
……"

Gaan!! The old man recalled the words told by the black clothed girl right after the end of the <<Killing Game>> last night, and slammed the wall with feelings as if his intestines were boiling .

"Tsukumooo……!!"

The reason why he said her surname instead of her name was because he was conscious about the person he competed before.

"The reason why I lost was because my <<Unit>> has not seen its completion yet…….!! But, soon-----the dawn of the day I ***complete*** that will be……!!"

Bristol, who threw away the <<Unit>>'s research, Tsukumo, whose research has left the old man in the dust-----

Edward swore inside his mad heart that he will prove that he is a better researcher than Tsukomo and that Bristol's judgment was a mistake by creating a God-killing army.

He violently opened his laboratory door in irritation before---noticing something.

There was a visitor before him.

"You're……."

Shock floated at the old man's face.

That's because, the visitor was-----

"Hey Salut there, <<Equipment Smith>>"

A young man wearing a gorgeous military uniform.

What's more, he's a top member of the organization Edward was affiliated with.

"…….did you come to laugh at me, <<Tempest Judge>>"

"I wouldn't do something like laugh at you. Followed by the previous <<Selection>>, you have shown the <<Power>> of the <<Unit>> far enough. With such a performance, I swear right here to propose the urgency to prepare it for actual battle in the next executive meeting"

"Houu, you do understand"

The old man gained satisfactions at the young man's words.

The research which was thrown away by the organization he was affiliated with, was finally connected to reality.

"However……..!!"

Edward looked at <<Judge>> with a dubious expression when his tone suddenly turned stronger.

"The reason why I came here today was not to talk about the official use of the <<Unit>>"

"Hou? Did you come to tell me that it's ironic that my <<Unit>> lost in the <<Killing Game>> you prepared? However, the results will be different if ***that*** was complete-----"

"Non
No, nothing of that sort"

After making a cool smile, the military clothed young man told him the reason why he came to the laboratory.

"I came to report you that your research has been aborted, <<Equipment Smith>>"

"Wha…….!? Wha-what do you mean!? The external weapons will soon be completed and------"

After getting shocked at the unexpected contents, Edward lost his composure.

But in front of the old man's lost of composure, <<Judge>> continued talking as if it was a nonchalant social talk.

"And after completion; You're going to have an actual test with the Dawn organization as the target right? Just so that you can satisfy that small self-esteem of yours"

"Small you say!? You brat!! I-----"

"There was already a warning, old man. I greatly value your achievements. But, the previous <<Selection>> and last night's <<Killing Game>> has crossed over the line. It will be a problem if our existence gets brought out to the light by for whimsical actions . Because of that-----it has been decided that you will be sitting in the rocking chair"

The meaning of his words point to-----Regulation.

"Wai-wait! We no longer have to dive into the darkness anymore once I complete the external weapon----"

Edward's words couldn't reach its end.

"Sad to say but, that small <<Power>> isn't enough. There are still many things that have to be achieved before a strong wind can occur. I will use it when the time comes for it. Of course for your <<Unit>>, and also all your <<Power>> who you have created until now"

While saying that, <<Judge>> took out a gun from his pocket-----

"……..Oh yes, please rest assured. In order to prevent you from being lonely, I gave all the people under your command, a vacation. If there was anyone that felt any respect towards you hidden inside the team then, it might be possible to a problem might occur"

He pointed the gun at Edward.

Bonne Vacance Eternia

"Okay------Have a nice vacation, for eternity"

Pann!! A dry gunshot echoed-----

"Ah……Guh……..Oh Jesus……."

A hole was formed in his head and Edward collapsed after mumbling something soft.

It was a sad end.

Before his dream which can be called an obsession, reached reality-----the old man died.

Towards the old man which can only be described as a mass of meat; <<Tempest Judge>> looked at him pitifully.

"<<Equipment Smith>>. A man that tried to create a God-killing army…….and his last words was a prayer towards God; How ironic this is"

『I Will, When That Time Comes

Part 1

"There is one last…….thing I want to say"

Miyabi said it silently under the crescent moon floating up in the night sky.

Going back a little into the past.

Today too, after 2 days from the fight in the mansion; Julie was still hospitalized and I would pass a peaceful time by talking or watching TV with her, since I was accompanying her.

There is that problem about <<K>> getting loose but, nothing occurred in this 2 days and the emptiness made it feel like those peaceful days has come back to the surface.

Even without that problem, it's not like those normal days returned.

That's because, I still couldn't talk to Miyabi.

Miyabi and Tachibana came to see Julie today and yesterday too but, there's no way I could talk about something that important here.

However, it was the evening and-----

(It's almost time……)

My heart was in chaos enough to make me look at the clock several times.

"Can you come to the school gate at 6pm?"

During the afternoon, Miyabi told me that when she was about to head back from coming over.

"……..Tooru. You look restless since just now but, is there something wrong?"

"Eh? Ah……..i am going to meet Miyabi after this"

"Is that so. Then you should go now. It's starting to turn dark and please go there while being aware of your footsteps"

"Y-yeah. I'll do that"

5:40pm. it's still a little too early to head to the school gate now.

But, rather than passing time in chaos in this medical room, I think it might be a better idea if I quickly head to the meeting spot to wait for Miyabi.

"Kokonoe. Are you about to head to the school gate?"

After getting out from the medical building, I met up with Tachibana.

Looks like she knows that I am about to meet Miyabi; and came here to talk to me just in case.

"Yeah, it's earlier than the promise time so, I was wondering if I should take the long road around"

"Then you don't have to worry. Miyabi is probably there already"

"Eh, really!? Then, I have to go straight there. Thanks for telling me"

"Umu. Be careful while getting there. Watch the time to avoid coming back late"

With that weird farewell in my head, I ran under the sky which was slowly turning indigo.

(It's true that, it will become the time when the footing will be dangerous if we had a long talk)

There were outdoor lights installed around the premise but, it doesn't change the fact that it will become dark after the sun sets.

(Talk huh……..)

We will probably talk about the <<Unit>>, about the confession , and about the future.

If that's the case then the possibility that everything ending early will be low.

At the same time, I think it's probably going to be an important talk.

That's why; I have to make up my mind inside my heart quick.

I soon passed the guard station and the front gate to find----

She was over there.

"Go-good evening, Tooru-kun. How are your injuries…….?"

"Yeah, I talked about this during the afternoon too but, It hurts just a little-----wait, Miyabi, what's with that outfit?"

I opened my eyes in reflex when I was half-way through my words.

That's only normal; that's because Miyabi was wearing a yukata .

"Ah, Thi-this? Errr------how should I put this, it's like making memories, err……..i bought this together with Momo-chan and Tomoe-chan during the afternoon------or are you saying that it doesn't look good on me……..?"

"Tha-that's not true. It really cute on you"

"Cu-cute……!? Yo-you don't have to be so polite……."

"-----? No, I am not being polite, I just said what I felt though"

"Ah……i-is that so…errr, th-thank you, Tooru-kun……"

With her face slightly facing downwards, Miyabi thanked me.

"But why are you wearing a yukata-----ah, forget that…….. you wanted to tell me something?"

"U-un……..but before I tell you; can I take some of your time? "

"Eh? Ye-yeah, I don't mind but……..is there something going on?"

"…….a-actually. I thought of wanting to go to the fireworks contest being held nearby, today. Then, if Tooru-kun is okay with that then…….s- so I thought if I could go with you and, err, well I am saying----"

"Fireworks contest…….?"

I replied back by reflex when she gave out a weird word.

Miyabi nodded.

"I-I wanted……to go on a date with you……."

"Heh?"

I opened my mouth blankly and replied back with a dumb tone.

I came here after making up mind, thinking that this was an important talk but, now she tells me that she wanted a date-------

There's no way I wouldn't get dumbfounded from this.

"I, can't?"

"------! N-no, it's okay! Errr, okay!"

The moment I saw the end of her eyebrows dropped with a troubled look, I quickly nodded-------

"Aha, I am so glad"

A flower known as a smile bloomed on Miyabi's face immediately.

"Ah, but I look like this and I didn't bring my wallet, also I didn 't send out an application for outing……..."

T-shirts on the top and jeans for the bottom is still acceptable but, I won't be able to get through the station's ticket gate without applying to go outside.

"I-if that's the problem then, wait for a moment……!"

After saying that, Miyabi pass through the main gate and went into the guard station while making *Karan**karan*sounds with her wooden clogs------she then talked about something with the security who attended before coming back after a while later.

"I sent an application for outing"

From what I heard from her, it seems that I can send an application of outing through the guard station.

"I thought there was no other way to apply other than through the housemaster or the office……."

"*Giggle*. It's written in the student memo, Tooru-kun"

……..Sad to say, of course; I didn't look through it.

"Okay then, Tooru-kun…….L-let's go for a date"

"Eh, Y-yeah, okay……."

After saying that once more, my thoughts finally were able to catch up with the events after it was being half-dragged around.

I am going to a fireworks contest now with a girl that likes me.

Going on a date.

After hearing those words, we headed towards the station while harboring a small fear -----unbearable shock, confusion, and also embarrassed in our chest.

(Uwah, I am red until my ears……)

We got on the monorail, and I noticed that fact the first time when I got under the electric lamp which was incomparably brighter than the outdoor lights.

I found out that I wasn't the only one nervous and felt a little relieved.

---but even so, I don't know what I should be talking about in this situation, and just kept silent just like that.

There aren't many students coming out at this time so, there were only us and one group inside the train. The group looks like they are having a date too but, unlike us, they were having fun talking to each other.

No matter; I tried making a conversation in order to fix this silent situation.

"W-we're almost there"

"U-un, that's right……"

""……""

Conversation over.

(Uaaaah, we could talk normally before this……)

But, I just can't remember how I used to talk to Miyabi.

When I was troubled, Miyabi looked downwards while talking to me.

"I-it's my------first……."

"!?"

"It's my first time going for a date with a boy, err……..i-I don't know what I should talk about and-----"

(I-is that so…….)

I pat my chest in relief…….i was thinking too much.

Anyway; I was the one that felt apologetic when she apologized to me while slightly looking up at me.

"If that's what you say then, even I am also really nervous too since this is my first date and I have no idea what to talk about. That's why, sorry for making you put up with such a boring date"

"Eh…….? It's Tooru-kun's…..first time too?"

I replied "That's right" at that surprised look.

"Bu-but; you dated Julie-chan many times already right? And, for Lilith-san; I heard that she dated with Tooru-kun before……"

"I and Julie don't go out with those intents in mind, as for Lilith; I was kind of forced to go out with Lilith so I think that's different"

"I-is that so…..bu-but, how about before entering Kouryou?"

"Completely none. From before with my childhood-----ah, it's a guy by the way. I, he and my sister would always pass the time together. That's why, I think this is my first date"

"I, took Tooru-kun's first……"

After a mumble that sounds like chewing, Miyabi smiled happily.

"Fufuu, I feel kind of happy. My first time is with Tooru-kun and Tooru-kun's first time is with me so-----both of us are experiencing our first time"

After seeing that smile, I felt my shoulders relaxing a little.

"That's true. So, isn't it fine if there's a little failure in it? …….. rather, I would be happy if you could forgive me for any failures"

While finally making a wry smile, I naturally let out my words.

I was wondering what to talk about until just now but, it's like that event was a lie.

"Un, so give me a break if i made any failures okay"

"Haha, of course"

And of course, we immediately reached the station.

We stood up when the train was about to stop-------and I extended my hand towards Miyabi.

"Ah……Thank you, Tooru-kun"

Miyabi timidly placed her hand on my hand before standing up too.

But, our conversation didn't end there.

"…….E-ermm, Tooru-kun. Can we stay like this?"

"Stay like this?"

"Keeping our hands connected……."

"Eh? A……..aah, okay. It's a date…after all"

"Unnn"

Even though I was a little shy about it, I gripped the hand connecting my hand a little tighter.

It was really embarrassing and it made my heart beat but------I felt a tinge of guilt.

After switching trains, we got closer to our intended station, and the number of people heading to the fireworks contest increased. We then got out the station we arrived at and saw guides standing everyone, who will lead us to the event, we then followed the people at our surroundings who were heading towards the event hall.

"There's quite a lot of shop huh"

"Should be buy something to eat first?"

"That might be a good idea. It's weird that we might have the leisure to buy anything from the stalls once we reach the hall"

Normally, we would eat dinner steadily but our opinions match regarding eating early.

We let our hands go at that point; after i went to buy a hot dog and grilled corn while Miyabi went for tuna salad crepe, both of us also purchased Imagawaki for both of ourselves before heading to the hall while eating.

Incidentally, Miyabi was the one that bought all this since I didn 't bring my wallet but, even though this is something unavoidable because on how the events ended up to a date; I felt really pathetic from the bottom of my heart……..

"Ah, Tooru-kun"

"Hn?"

"Errr……."

Miyabi saw my face and the moment she looked like she wanted to say something----

"There is a corn on you"

After saying that, she extends her hand to my cheek and took it off.

---What's more, she then ate it.

"Ah……..."

"E-errr…….th-this is embarrassing……..."

"Yo-you're right……."

Maybe we felt the same so; both of us looked down without looking at each other face.

And, at that moment-----

*Doon*just when I thought I heard a loud sound and the air shook, there was a giant flower blooming in the night sky.

"Waaah, it's beautiful……it's also so big……..."

When we got closer to the launching spot; Miyabi and also i gazed at the fireworks because of its intensifying size.

"It's so big. It's my first time seeing fireworks this close"

"Fufuu, that goes for me too. It has a strong intensity"

"Aah. It's dangerous to look while looking so, bear with it until we reach a spot where we can take a good look"

"Un, that's true"

We threw our rubbish to the garbage bin prepared at the roadside and started heading to the hall again before-----

I shyly placed my hands on Miyabi's hand.

"Th-there's so many people here and we have to be careful not to separate"

I said that to hide my embarrassment by holding Miyabi's hands-----

"Un. Thank you, Tooru-kun"

Miyabi made a smile and held back.

Soon later; we reached the bank which was the hall for the fireworks contest but-----

What awaited us was a great ordeal.

We were lucky until the point when we could start watching the fireworks after we found a space where we could stand and watch.

However, the hall turned more complex as time passes. The space naturally closed in because of the large numbers of people and I started getting closer to Miyabi; but that was still in the safe.

After that------things went to a weird direction when Miyabi's overly voluptuous breast touched my arms. People cramped us in as time passed by even though we tried to move to another spot and the commotion was no longer at the point where we could move anymore. Miyabi's breast were pushed onto my arms as time passed by and the shape changed-------as a result of trying to move my body; the situation turned into my arms getting stuck.

---rather; my arms are stuck in between her breast.

(M-m-m-my musculus brachioradialis, musculus flexor carpi radialis, extensor digitorum muscle, and all those muscles that make my arm stuck. Between. Melons(*Figurative Speech)!!)

360 degrees of my arm was completely covered with a softness comparable to a marshmallow and my mind fell into panic.

Until now; there were times when her modest breast touched me when I was sleeping with Julie.

There was a time when my elbow touched her large breast and it went *Pyon**pyon* when we joined arms.

There was a time when I lost to Tachibana's pinning technique and her breast got *Funyon**Funyon* pressed onto my face.

There was a time when I grabbed hold onto Imari's shapely breast in an accident.

However, all the memories of those events got blasted away in front of this overwhelming power. *Temporarily though.

Or course, Miyabi also knows what situation she was in.

Adding in shyness; Miyabi looked up at me with her cheeks blushing from the heat while breathing wildly because it was stuffy.

"Hnn,haaa……Fu-haa…….So-sorry, Tooru-kun. i……..Hnn ……..Hnnn!"

"Nnnnooo, there's nothing to apologize. It's an accident, this situation can't be helped, how should I say it; honestly speaking, it 's like heaven and hell……."

(Wait, what the heck am I sayiiiiiinnnggggg……..!!)

I shouted in my heart while I was under the night sky filled with giant round flowers blooming.

---Nonetheless; this might be too late to say this but, the names of all the muscle parts were gained from Tatsu.

In the end, the collaboration of heaven and hell continued until the end of the fireworks contest.

It got closer to the end; and once our body finally separated because people started taking the road back, we scuttle away from the spot by riding the wave of moving people.

We got down the bank, and about the time we entered the route heading towards the city; we finally got a chance to take a breather .

""……""

"Errr…….l-let's go back"

"U-uun, okay……."

Without feeling the urge to walk towards the stalls, we decided to take the road back.

There weren't many conversations in the train because of the awkwardness during the fireworks.

Soon; by the time we got on the Kouryou academy's personal monorail, both of us were conscious about the end of the date and the atmosphere got heavy.

Even though we reached the monorail in front of the academy; we only limited the conversation to its minimum like [We're here] or [Let's get off].

We passed through the giant door which was standing out from the outside light and was in the middle of walking to the dorms silently before------

"Hey, Tooru-kun…….can we take a detour for a while..…?"

Miyabi said that at a fork road.

I felt her intentions and suggested the course leading towards the garden which has no one there at this time.

She did not reject the suggestion and we started walking on another road which wasn't heading to the dorm.

After we approached the garden, Miyabi opened her closed mouth.

"The fireworks were beautiful. Many spread out in the sky……..things turned out weird half-way but, It was fun today"

"It was fun for me too. It was really interesting to see fireworks that close"

"Fufu, that's true. *Don**Don* It was really amazing that each shot would echo in the core of the body"

"Aah, that was amazing. I can still feel the shaking deep inside my body. It's a rare experience so I won't be forgetting tonight's event for a while"

"Un……..ah……..P-please hurry and forget the part that happened half-way okay?"

"O-of course……"

Even though I answered that, it's impossible to forget that fast.

Because we recalled back that event, the small awkwardness returned and we started walking again quietly. In the garden beside us, the 4 seasonal flowers floated inside the light. Maybe because the visibility was bad at night; the scent felt stronger compared to when I usually pass through this road.

Not long later; Miyabi stopped near the fountain which was light up and I stopped too after walking forward a few steps before turning to her.

"Can we have a small chat here……..?"

"…….Aah"

After hearing my reply, Miyabi nodded silently------and started talking after waiting for a while.

"Today-----uuun, I am really thankful from the day of enrollment until today. Tooru-kun would come to save me whenever I got into trouble, I was really happy for that…….and really sorry about it……."

Not only was the fountain was lighted up, Miyabi's depressed expression was lighted too.

"Whether it's the time from the <<Survive>>, or the seaside school; Tooru-kun might have lost your life if there was any mistake…….like the time before, I was almost close to killing you because of my stupidity……"

"……It's already something that passed. I am alive as you can see. It's alright"

"……"

Without any reply, I asked the question that has been in my mind the whole time.

"Miyabi……..are you going to quit school?"

Just like what I told her just now; I no longer care about the << Unit>> problem.

However, the surroundings are different.

Even though they don't know the situation in detail, Miyabi wearing the <<Unit>> spread throughout the school and she probably had many odd sights directed to her.

It's fact that Miyabi feels heavy from all those sights. She hurt many students with the <<Power>> of the <<Unit>>. Even though there wasn't any danger to their lives; they suffered broken bones like Tachibana.

Although she was controlled by the <<Equipment Smith>>, that was an undeniable fact.

If Miyabi made her decision because she couldn't bear the guilt anymore then it can't be helped.

And one more thing; the reason why I wondered Miyabi would quit the school was-----

The word she said right after inviting me to a date.

Miyabi said that it was to make memories.

Thinking about the meaning those words display, I could only come up with one answer.

That's why I made this question----and it was also for confirmation.

After a silence that feels like eternity-----

Miyabi gradually opened her mouth.

"On that day……..on that day I hurt everyone with the << Unit>>…….Tomoe-chan was beside me when I woke up. At that time, Tomoe-chan apologized to me. Even though I should be the one apologizing……."

Her expression turned painful because she recalled back those painful memories; I felt that too and it made my heart hurt.

"Tomoe-chan told me everything about her feelings while apologizing…….and she said this at the end. Let's become stronger……."

"……Did you come up with the answer?"

I asked my question and Miyabi nodded.

"I won't quit"

Miyabi replied with a soft but strong answer.

"I think it's shameless to say this after causing so trouble to Tooru-kun, Tomoe-chan and many people in this incident……"

"No-no way……..shameless is just------no, there might be people that think that but…….however, at the very least----I am happy"

"Ah……..Fufu, I am happy that you told me that"

"I told you this before. I will feel lonely if Miyabi isn't around. That's why, I will obviously be happy if you told me that you were staying"

Un, Thank you---------Miyabi continued while making a small smile.

"I was forced to know about my feelings in this incident; It was just plain self-hatred.....I kept telling you that I wanted you to see me strong, remember?"

"Yeah, you said that"

While nodding, I noticed that Miyabi had some memories of the time when she was controlled.

"But like I thought; that was just my desire. I wanted to become strong and show you……that hasn't change and is still inside me. That's why----"

Miyabi looked at me with earnest eyes and told me her wish.

"I want to become strong. I want to become stronger in the true way…….! Not only strength, I also want to gain the heart that won't get bewitched by a fake……..I want Tooru-kun to look at me------who succeeded in changing even though I have no talent"

She agreed with the desire inside her and moreover, she carried a strong determination towards her goal.

I could tell the seriousness from Miyabi's eyes and tone.

"If I run from that now then it will never happen so--------that's why, I will never quit Kouryou academy, and will work hard here "

Miyabi smiled after finishing her words.

Miyabi was different than before; that smile was filled with a strong will.

After seeing that smile, I leaked a smile in reflex.

"I understand. I will look forward for it. I look forward to see Miyabi becoming strong"

"U-un"

"If you are going to work hard then, I will work hard too and help you by pushing your back"

"Eh…….? Together with Tooru-kun too……?"

I nodded and talked towards Miyabi, who opened her eyes in surprise.

"Yeah, of course. Tachibana also said to become stronger together right? Then, it's natural for me to be included in that

together too. That's because I am greatly related to Miyabi's goal so I will take the responsibility to look after you"

"Eh…..R-responsibility…….!?"

"Yeah. Is that shocking?"

"N-noo. Errr, erhmm, I am just happy, ahaha……."

I tilted my head in my mind when I saw Miyabi flustered for some reason.

Miyabi took a deep breath several times to fix her breathing-----

The atmosphere changed when she lifted her face.

Her smile disappeared and she stared at me with serious eyes.

"There is one last….thing I want to say"

Miyabi said it silently under the crescent moon floating up in the night sky.

"I said this before but, I want Tooru-kun to listen one more time . I want to hear your reply regarding that time……I won't run away this time"

"……..i understand"

She told me what she was about to talk and I nodded.

The talk that was interrupted in front of the sea glowing in gold; restarts again.

"I love you Tooru-kun"

Miyabi told me her feelings.

"I loved you ever since that time when Tooru-kun told me that you would be lonely if I wasn't here. I love you very much. That's why, if it's okay with Tooru-kun----please go out with me"

Leaving a slight gap in between, Miyabi told me.

I raised my head in guilt again to the girl who told me her wish-her earnest feelings.

That guilt that tormented me during the time when we linked hands when we were half-way heading to the fireworks contest.

But, I have to tell her.

It is my job to give her a proper answer, for she said that she won't run away.

"Thanks, Miyabi. I am really happy…..that you told me that you love me"

I hesitated on that day at the sea.

I, who can't throw away the twisted thoughts of revenge, wondered on how I should reply Miyabi's honest feelings.

"But……..."

But, my answer was already out in the first place.

"There is something I have to accomplish no matter what. Even if I have to throw away everything, I have to"

My road as an <<Avenger>> will end once I achieve my revenge.

However, will I be able to return back to the righteous path again with my tainted fist and after walking in darkness until that day?

There's no way that such a person can receive feelings from a girl standing under the light.

Only sadness will await her if I accept it.

"That's why-----sorry. I cannot go out with Miyabi"

Zukiri My chest hurt from a sharp pain.

Hurting a girl who have affections towards me-----

However, I wasn't the only one whose chest was hurting.

"Can I ask what that matter is……..?"

"……..Sorry, I can't say"

That answer was dishonest to reply to Miyabi who threw her earnest feelings at me.

But, even if it might be dishonest, I could only say that much.

"At that time, I had a problem on what I should say……..."

A misunderstanding was created and I hurt her.

"Is that so……..Then, It's not like my feelings were a bother?"

"Y-yeah. I said this before just now……..i am really happy about it"

"I see……"

Both of us stopped our words there.

The sound of the fountain was the only sound that reached my ears.

The paused time continued on before-----after a while, Miyabi lifted her face.

In the next moment; I got surprised.

That's because even though the side of her eyes were lowered, she was making a smile.

"Then, it can't be helped"

"Eh……?"

"It's something more important than anything else for Tooru-kun right? If that's the case then it can't be helped……….also, there is one more I want to ask"

"Something you want to ask?"

Miyabi hesitated----and talked.

"J-just now, you said that you were happy that I told you about my feelings right? Is it okay to think that you have some affection to me?"

At that question; I honestly told Miyabi my honest feelings which I had been thinking ever since the confession.

"I……i am aware that Miyabi's a girl and at the very least like you. But above all that, the feelings of like is stronger as a friend now"

"Like as a friend……..."

"…….Sorry"

I could only apologize.

But, Miyabi swung her head sideways in panic.

"D-don't apologize. I feel disappointed but, I am also relieved……."

"Relieved?"

"Un. That's because you said that you were conscious of me as a girl. At the very least, you like me……..if that's the case then-----"

Miyabi slightly pulled back her chin and looked at me.

It's probably a normal gesture for Miyabi since she looks down a lot but-----

Honestly speaking; that upward look is so cute that it's cheating .

"T-there might be a chance if I don't give up?"

This question came above that so; I got flustered.

"Ch-chance……..?"

"Th-there might be a chance that you will love me as a girl instead of a friend inside Tooru-kun"

"Eh, ah,errrr, ahhhh……w-well I guess so?"

"Ah…….Ehehe, I did it……♪ if that's the case then, I will work hard. Not only strength; I will work hard to show you my female charm too, Tooru-kun"

"Y-yeah……"

Being overpowered by an unknown source, I could only nod towards the girl who said that with a charming smile.

"Errrr, Miyabi, I feel that you are really positive right now though……..."

"I-I am disappointed. But, it won't be any different from before if I stay disappointed……..i decided to make my heart strong too so, I thought I should work hard to be positive……."

"I-I see……."

"Hey Tooru-kun. I will work hard. I will work very very hard. I will work hard in becoming a charming girl, training and studies. That's why-----"

Miyabi announced, while showing a shy smile.

"I am counting on you from now on, Tooru-kun"

Under the starry sky, the smile covered with the lights from the fountain was very charming.

Part 2

"……You don't have to come anymore"

"Eh…….Bu-but……"

Miyabi looked perplexed when she heard the words said by the 2nd year boy who suffered injuries from her.

"Even I know that it wasn't truly your fault. That's why, you don't have to come anymore"

"Y-yes…….Err, thank you for forgiving me, Senpai"

After lowering her head, Miyabi left the boy.

Behind her, Tooru and Tomoe, Julie and Lilith, Sara, Tora& Tatsu; the whole gang followed her.

"Everyone forgives you now with this"

"Un……..thank you all for following me, even though it's my problem"

"Fuun, seriously. Why must I, someone unrelated lower my head……..."

"Oh my, I didn't lower my head you know"

"Why did you even follow then!!"

"Oh, calm down Tora. We are thankful that you all came together with us"

"Un……Thank you, Tora-kun, Lilith-san"

Tora gritted his teeth to the gold girl who said "See".

Seeing them like that, Tooru felt their normal days have returned.

There should still be students who think badly of Miyabi.

But even so, things will definitely clear out by Miyabi's future actions.

With the turning point on the night of the fireworks contest; Miyabi's lifestyle changed in 2 ways.

One; She started running in the morning and evening again.

The other one was regarding the running but------

"Good morning, Miyabi"

"Go-good morning, Tooru-kun"

With Miyabi's request; Tooru promised to show up to run instead of going to morning training with Tomoe once every week.

"Miyabi, here. I'll hand over this before I forget"

"I-isn't this……"

Right before starting to run, the object Tooru handed to Miyabi was a pure white heart shaped stone.

It was the stone she dropped after telling her love to Tooru.

That right now; returned to Miyabi's hands.

"I wanted to hand this to you. But handing it over when there are people around is just……"

The girl giggled at the young man who looks flustered.

"Mi-Miyabi"

"*Giggle* it's a joke. Then, I will work hard today too, Tooru-kun"

"Yeah, that's right"

"Yeah, that's right"

After nodding while making a wry smile at Miyabi who turned more cheerful than before, Tooru ran beside her.

Half-way-----

"……Now that I think about it, there is something I remembered. You said that you wanted to use the fireworks to make some memories. What was with that anyway? I thought Miyabi was about to quit Kouryou so that's the reason why but, now that I think clearly about it, you had no intentions for that……"

"Ah……..A-about that……"

To reply Tooru's question, Miyabi explained while she was out of breath.

"I-I wanted to use that as energy for me to, work hard for now on……..if I have fun memories then, I can work hard during harsh times……..."

"I see. I guess I am glad that it became fun memories for you to work hard for"

"U-un. But, things turn embarrassing if I remember the whole thing……."

"……Miyabi, I won't be able to forget if you keep saying that you know?"

"-------!! To-Tooru-kun you pervert! You must not remember-----!!"

"It's my fault!?"

Even though they were causing a ruckus, both of them were running at a pace unobtainable for a normal human.

"Okay, last lap! Let's do this, Miyabi"

"U-un, I'll work hard…….but, Tooru-kun, you can go on ahead……"

"Aah, okay. Then, I'll go on ahead"

After hearing Miyabi's works, Tooru raised his pace which was unthinkable for a last lap.

Tooru's back turned small in no time at all.

(You're so fast, Tooru-kun…….also, very far. But, I will catch up someday)

To avoid losing the back of the boy she loves, Miyabi slightly raises her pace.

Today more than yesterday----tomorrow faster than today; gradually increasing.

(At that time, I will definitely make you look at me……..!!)

The girl was changing.

One step at a time towards the ideal she wishes.

Epilogue

Part 1

"Kevin. Tell me if you have any problems. Onii-chan will definitely protect you"

The boy's brother was kind.

He was always worried about the boy and would borrow his strength if it wasn't enough but would not dote on him too much.

His sports and studies were always at the top; that was his proud brother.

The boy was excellent too but, it could not be helped that he looks weaker compared to his brother; and although the boy head a small complex in this, he still respected him.

However------the world change on a certain day.

That's because the brother lost his life to save his younger brother.

His gentle and intimate parents were the ones who felt the most sadness when he lost his brother.

However, the boy's family slowly broke down because of the brother death before------

The boy was thrown away not long later.

He was sold to the people in the underworld.

The place he was sold to was an institute that develops soldiers.

The boy lost his name there and was called with a codename-----that was the start of hell.

Several people who lost their names lost their lives from the intense training.

There were times when he had to lay his hands on the people he ate together with until yesterday to survive.

Even though his tears stopped flowing somewhere along the line, he shouted out with a broken heart.

"Onii-san, why won't you come to save me? You said that you will protect me; you liar……."

After <<K>> opened his eyes, the stink of the dirty back alley and dust touched his nose.

(……..Look's like I fell asleep for a while)

He was currently being chased.

After being captured by the Ethanarch, a Gogmagog team attacked the transport car while it was moving.

He thought they came to save him but reality was different.

"You are thrown away from the organization"

The team that attacked came with the goal to silence <<K>>.

He killed the man who pointed the gun at him while making a vulgar smile and was currently in this position.

In the middle of his escape, he has already gained the information that the <<Equipment Smith>> was overthrown and dead.

"…….it's possible to recreate as many <<Libel>> as they want if they have the <<Unit>>"

There were many soldiers like him in the organization.

They will probably be the new <<El Libel>>.

(Well, what should I do now……..)

The cloth wrapped around his stomach changed into dark red.

He got shot when he fought with the pursuers.

His wounds were serious and even though he survives the pursuers, it won't be long until death visits him.

<<K>> closed his eyes and think.

In order to decided his greatest wish for his remaining time.

After some hours later, the Gogmagog far eastern branch was attacked.

They were chasing after the attacker; it was the boy that had his name given by them.

<<K>>, who completely knows the interior layout, caused the branch to fall into great chaos------

Soon; he disappeared at the same time when the gunshots stopped.

Together with the <<Equipment Smith>>'s last creation which can also said to be his legacy- the external weapon.

Kouryou academy was the final fighting spot <<K>> picked.

Even though its night time, he was well aware that he would be spotted by the academy if he get close or infiltrate without any guide, so <<K>>-----descended onto the clock tower.

"Seriously…….I never would have imagined that this place would be my last battle spot. But--------I will definitely repay back the debt I received"

The wish <<K>> wished the most was the death of a certain person, and the despair of the people around that person.

<<K>> pressed his hurting chest and looked at the moon which has over half of its body missing before making a vow.

"The dead cannot protect anyone. That reality-----I will let your comrade know by killing you, Kokonoe Tooru…….!!"

"……..Sorry but, no matter how much you look up, the rabbit won't be on the moon tonight"

"O-ya, it's you huh"

When <<K>> turned there; a person holding the <<Snake>> was standing there wearing a maid outfit with rabbit ears.

"Don't O-ya me. Our chairman Ojou-chan already told you that visitors who did not contact our school beforehand will be refused "

"My apologies. I somehow had a sudden urge and decided to visit. That' why, I will be really happy if you would let me off this time too"

"Kuhah. I feel like doing that but, I was told to handle this matter by that kind person. So putting it into one word would be-----Refuse!!"

The young man replied back with a small smile towards Tsukimi Rito who pointed her finger at him.

"I have no choice then. Well then-----"

4 wings spread out while a red glow was emitted behind him.

Death would visit to those who sees it and turn them to a corpse ; it's the devils legacy.

"External weapon----I will show you the power of the << Destruction Wings of death>>!!"

Translation Notes and References

Chapter 2:

1. ↑ Kowtow, prostration
2. ↑ Fist spar
3. ↑ Editor note: normal temperature = Room temperature (20° C-24°C)

Chapter 3:

1. ↑ Everyone, thank you!!